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Rethinking Race and Crime

Black Americans' Impossible Dilemma
GLENN LOURY

Who Shot My Nephew?
DEBRA DICKERSON

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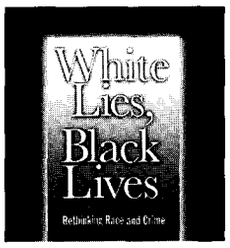

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CORRESPONDENCE

K sera

To the editors:

John B. Judis again has an important story ("The Contract With K Street," December 4, 1995) just exactly backward. He writes that " ... the growth of these businesses and social issues lobbies has created a phenomenal, and unprecedented, concentration of power in Washington." That is like blaming urban crime on the concentration of police. A writer with better insight would observe that "the concentration of power in Washington has created a phenomenal growth of business and social issues lobbies." A government that did not grant special favors or threaten individual rights would attract far fewer lobbyists. A return to limited constitutional government would make K Street look like an abandoned strip mall. Doubt me? Let's try it.

WILLIAM A. NISKANEN
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

John B. Judis's assertion that President Clinton's attempt "to remove the ban on gays in the military" "reflected the influence" of Washington lobbies, leaving the voters feeling "cheated and deceived," is too gross a lie to go uncorrected. Clinton made his commitment to lift the ban during the campaign, and millions voted for as well as against him on that ground. To conflate Clinton's one more-or-less principled stand with his drifting policies on taxes and spending is false. To attribute Clinton's policy on the ban to the sinister influence of Washington lobbies is preposterous.

DONALD A. DRIPPS
Urbana, Illinois

Wright from the beginning

To the editors:

I write concerning Robert Wright's characterization of Pat Buchanan as "American, Anglo-Saxon, Christian, heterosexual" ("Trading Places," December 4, 1995). While I will admit to being a fan of some types of political correctness, there are other types that I find excessive and repugnant, and so it is with some hesitation that I suggest that the umbrella of political correctness be extended to cover a group not previously conceived of as needing shelter from politically biased modes of representation: the Anglo-Saxons. Nevertheless, that is exactly what I am going to suggest.

Anglo-Saxon England was a highly artistic, highly sophisticated, highly cultured society whose scholars were well enough regarded on the continent that Charlemagne sent for them to teach at his court. This society, which was well esteemed by contemporary European cultures, flourished until it was overrun in 1066 by the Normans, who were far less culturally advanced in many areas than the people they conquered.

Calling Pat Buchanan Anglo-Saxon is therefore a misrepresentation on two counts: first because Anglo-Saxons have not existed for 900 years and, second, because the name Buchanan, whatever else it may be, is certainly not Anglo-Saxon (Wright, on the other hand: now there's an Anglo-Saxon name). The facile use of the term Anglo-Saxon to describe people like Buchanan is exactly the sort of thing that reinforces the appropriation of Anglo-Saxon literature and imagery by white supremacists and other collections of pernicious bigots. As an Anglo-Saxon scholar, I take umbrage at it.

In the very next paragraph, Wright implicitly criticizes Buchanan for not "having a moral compass that was built sometime after the Middle Ages." Fine. Never mind that our legal, educational and political systems had their incipience during the Middle Ages; what is disturbing about this statement is that it is precisely because Buchanan's peculiar brand of Christianity ignores the thousands of pages of theological commentary and scriptural exegesis that were penned during the Middle Ages that it is so morally culpable. Give me the name of a Church father or any well-known medieval ecclesiast and I'll give you the name of someone whose worldview was more sophisticated, nuanced, intelligent and perhaps even more compassionate than Pat Buchanan's. In fact, Buchanan's moral outlook is entirely a product of twentieth-century America, and it is to ourselves that we must look to explain it.

RAND HUTCHESON
Huntington, West Virginia

Kristol clear

To the editors:

As a big fan of the literary section of TNR (which, incidentally, Irving Kristol makes required reading for all who work for him), I was stunned by the downright disingenuousness of Paul Starr's December 4, 1995, review of Irving Kristol's most recent book, *Neoconservatism: History of an Idea* ("Nothing Neo"). Nearly every line and every idea in the review merits strong refutation; for considerations of space, let's limit the discussion here to religion—a major point of Starr's bristling condemnation.

Starr considers Kristol's criticism of secular humanism to be full of "redolent irony" because Kristol's "admired teacher" Sidney Hook was a secular humanist. Yes, and in Hook's *festschrift*, Kristol wrote of how they long disagreed on this point. Does Paul Starr agree with everything that his mentor, Daniel Bell, has written? Maybe, but it would not be ironic if he does not.

Starr launches an attack on some of Kristol's views on religion—well encapsulated in a Kristol line (not cited in the review), "Jews should stop worrying about Christians persecuting them and start worrying about Christians marrying them." That was basically the theme of Kristol's 1991 essay, "The Future of American Jewry," which Starr read to mean that *Commentary* would show Jews "how to be less outspoken about their concerns and less overt in their religious practices." Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth; few are more outspoken about their Jewish concerns than Kristol, and the whole point of his article was to encourage overt religious practice. But never mind.

Starr leaves the book he is reviewing to attack Kristol for a 1986 *New York Times* column on evolution. That would be fair game, of course—if Kristol said what Starr said he said. Starr makes Kristol out to be a "fellow traveling" creationist, contending, "[Kristol held] it was biology teachers who had a lot of apologizing to do." Actually, Kristol did not mention teachers in that column; about evolution, he made the rather noncontroversial point that scientists are divided over how the evolutionary process has worked and that these disagreements should not be glossed over in the classroom. Indeed, Kristol is harshest on the creationists: " 'Creation' is a matter of faith, not science.... Religious instruction in our public schools is something we have carefully avoided for most of American history, for the good and obvious reasons that in a pluralist society, theological issues can so easily become a focus of conflict."

MARK GERSON
New Haven, Connecticut

Little Ted

To the editors:

Your December 4, 1995, editorial "Tax Evasion" was ridiculous. What are you going to blame on Ralph Reed next?

Your hatred of the Republican plan to give working families a $500-per-child tax credit boils down to one thing—and you said it yourself: " ... mom and dad can blow the GOP's [tax] credit on whatever they like." That's what liberals just don't get! It is the American taxpayers' right to

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spend their hard-earned money as they see fit. If mom and dad choose to send little Ted to a parochial school so be it. It is their money and their choice. What President Clinton and the Democrats in Congress would like, however, is to steal the money from the pocket of mom and dad and decide for themselves what is best for little Ted.

Over the next seven years, the federal government will take in a whopping $11.4 trillion in revenue. The Republican tax cut will give less than 2 percent of that revenue back to the people who earned it. Seventy-four percent of the $500-per-child tax credit will go to families making less than $75,000 per year. In the end, the top 10 percent of American wage earners will bear over 48 percent of the tax burden, and the bottom 50 percent of earners will pay less than 5 percent.

You should be honest with your readers and admit the real reason you hate the Republican tax cut proposal—that you believe Washington bureaucrats know best how to spend the Americans hard-earned money, not mom and dad.

CURT WELDON
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Carma sutra

To the editors:

Howard Kurtz's article ("Bad Carma," December 4, 1995) on Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary's use of Computer-Aided Research and Media Analysis (Carma) to review press coverage of her department is faux naïve.

He says the DOE doesn't need this, because "You can do the same thing by reading the papers." Sure. For the same reason, they don't need an accountant—O'Leary can just go to the mailroom each day, look at the incoming bills, and add them up on her little calculator. It is absurd to suggest that there is something sinister about Carma, or that its use means the DOE wants to "work on" unfriendly reporters with "a rubber hose."

Tabulation of press coverage by an outside service can help the department's p.r. people educate their own management: if a top official takes a dislike to a reporter because of one article (happens all the time), you often can show her that on balance the reporter's coverage has been neutral. It also can help you help a journalist—if he seems to be misunderstanding a point, you can send him a backgrounder or a tailored file of data.

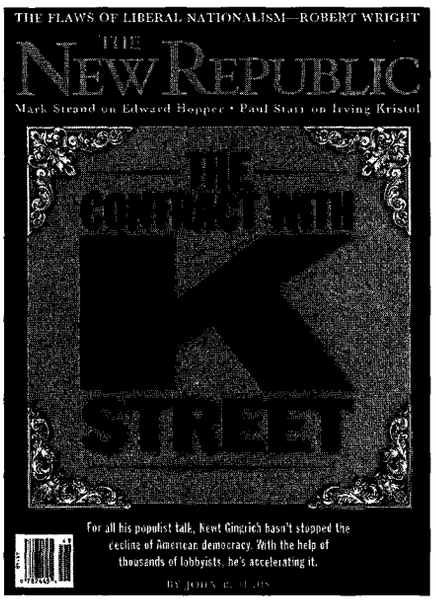
As a media reporter, Kurtz must know that "high-powered public relations firms" don't claim "they can turn bad press into good." They tell clients that bad or inept actions produce bad news but that you can contain the damage by doing and saying the right things at the right time.

LEE LEVITT
New York, New York

Breakfast club

To the editors:

Hanna Rosin's sleazy and inaccurate article on Republicans and Hollywood, "Friends" (December 11, 1995), maliciously tars us (along with many others) as two-faced and venal, criticizing Hollywood products when there is a political pay-off to be had and kissing proverbial backsides in Hollywood when there are political pockets to be lined. For the record: the Wednesday Morning Club is not "a Republican support group," but


THE FLAWS OF LIBERAL NATIONALISM—ROBERT WRIGHT
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Mark Strand on Edward Hopper • Paul Starr on Irving Kristol
THE CONTRACT WITH K STREET
For all his populist talk, Newt Gingrich hasn't stopped the decline of American democracy. With the help of thousands of lobbyists, he's accelerating it.

a nonpartisan association of entertainment industry professionals that hosts Democratic as well as Republican speakers; our members did not endorse Senator Bob Dole's critique of Hollywood (several in fact publicly criticized his remarks); and, finally, our defense of artistic freedom and opposition to any form of censorship has been consistently maintained and on public record for years. The same can be said for Sonny Bono, Tom DeLay, David Dreier, Mark Foley and Ken Calvert, all of whom were similarly smeared by Rosin.

DAVID HOROWITZ
Steering committee,
Wednesday Morning Club
Washington, D.C.

Ace of clubs

To the editors:

Matthew Cooper's Washington Diarist ("Saab Story," December 11, 1995) raises the interesting idea that cities purchase their sports teams to prevent relocation. But what if they're not for sale?

I suggest the following: an aggressive state legislature (or municipal body operating in its stead) could seize a ball club as an exercise of eminent domain, proffering "just compensation" pursuant to the Fifth Amendment (and similar state constitutional requirements).

Following the inevitable litigation as to whether a franchise is "property" that may be staked in the name of the public good (a likely proposition: the sovereign's exercise of eminent domain is rarely denied), cities would be invested with a serious counter-threat to extortionist appeals for luxury skyboxes and new stadiums.

DAVID L. WAGNER
Chicago, Illinois

Relentless

To the editors:

It must be obvious to readers of his Diarist pieces that Andrew Sullivan is very fond of a certain music duo. And in his shameless appropriation of their song titles for those columns, he no doubt believes he's being quite clever. But I have a different point of view: he's being boring. It's a sin that he can't come up with unique or appropriate headings for his pieces. After finishing his latest ("Do I Have To?" November 20, 1995) I am forced to wonder, nervously, if it is really so hard for an Oxonian (and Harvard Ph.D.) to be original. I'm actually willing to give him one more chance, but honestly: What have we done to deserve this?

DAVID BANUSH
New York, New York

Stealing

To the editors:

Jonathan Chait's witty lament on the inconveniences attendant on his financial "system" reminds me of the Restoration comedy types who thought it a damnable thing that a gentleman was actually expected to pay his tailor's bill ("Leave Me Alone," December 4, 1995). Chait focuses on stiffing the phone and utility companies—safer targets these days than tailors. But in fact, his financial insouciance is general: he throws out the whole pile of bills. In other words, it's his practice to use services for which he doesn't pay—and to skip town when payment is demanded. I believe there's a name for that kind of activity—one that's a bit more direct than what Chait disarmingly calls "my financial pathology."

LAURENCE BEHRENS
Ventura, California

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

Speaker's corner

You have a Speaker who is the least ethical Speaker in the twentieth century.
—Newt Gingrich, circa 1989

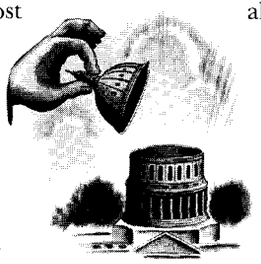
Eight years ago, when Newt Gingrich began raising questions about the ethics of Speaker of the House Jim Wright, he was admirably candid about his larger political purpose. In a book about Wright called *The Ambition and the Power,* journalist John Barry reports Gingrich saying in 1987, "Wright's a useful keystone to a much bigger structure. I'll just keep pounding and pounding on his ethics. There comes a point where it comes together and the media takes off on it or it dies." It came together. Wright resigned in 1989 after the House Ethics Committee's special counsel returned a scathing report on him.

Lately, Gingrich has had occasion to revisit the vexing issue of when it is and isn't fair to use the Ethics Committee for political purposes. His conclusion: now it isn't. Shortly before the committee slapped his wrists and called for a special counsel's investigation, he had this to say of Democrats who had flooded the committee with complaints about him: "They are misusing the ethics system in a deliberate, vicious, vindictive way, and I think it is despicable. . . . " Don't forget grotesque.

Comparisons between the ill-fated Wright and the increasingly beleaguered Gingrich are being firmly resisted by Gingrich sympathizers. The operative distinction was made on "Nightline" the day of the Ethics Committee report. "Nobody has ever said he took an illegal dime or anything," said a Gingrich biographer. "It's not a Jim Wright case." By the weekend, this point had been absorbed into mainstream right-wing apologism. "Remember, this was not something to line his own pockets," Fred Barnes noted on "The McLaughlin Group."

There are two problems with this defense. First, it's not true that Gingrich has never been accused of taking "an illegal dime." In 1989, he was accused of lining his pockets in ways reminiscent of Wright.

Wright, you may recall, had found a creative way to get money from lobbyists in spite of the $20,000 annual ceiling on outside honoraria. He took a bunch of old speeches, collated them and sold the resulting "book" in bulk to groups of avid readers, such as the Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association. The royalties—at the unheard-of rate of 55 percent—added up quickly. Gingrich, too, published a book during the 1980s, a futuristic conservative manifesto called *Window of Opportunity.* In Gingrich's case, unlike Wright's, "book" is a fair description. Though published by something called "Tom Doherty Associates," his tome was sold in real book stores and fetched a legitimate author's royalty of 10 percent. What was unorthodox was the means of promotion. Gingrich got twenty-one "investors"—most of them past campaign contributors—to pool $105,000 for a "limited partnership" whose mission was to publicize his book.



The book sold well enough for Gingrich and his wife to collect $24,000 in royalties. Now, it is safe to say that this number would have been markedly lower in the absence of the $105,000 fund for advertising, touring and so on (even though, Washington being Washington, a chunk of the $105,000 went to overhead for bureaucratic elites—specifically, an $11,500 fee for administrative duties performed by Gingrich's wife, Marianne; this brought the total Gingrich take to $35,500). Thus, by standard economic analysis, the twenty-one "partners" had subsidized Gingrich. Like Wright, he had found a way for special interests to put money in his pockets, notwithstanding any House limits on outside income.

Was the cash flow more oblique in Gingrich's case? Yes. But being more subtle than Jim Wright isn't the same as being less venal. Were Gingrich's pockets lined on a smaller scale than Wright's? Yes, but that's just because the book failed to become a best-seller. Can Gingrich claim, more plausibly than Wright, that he was trying not to get rich but to spread his ideology? Yes; although Wright's "book" did convey *his* ideology, his scheme was undeniably a naked money grab compared to Gingrich's more ambiguous operation. Indeed, Richard Phelan, the special counsel who had brought Wright down, looked into the Gingrich deal in 1989 and found insufficient grounds for condemnation. Still, this Gingrich book deal is not the sort of thing we expect from someone who calls another congressman the least ethical Speaker of the century.

The second, and larger, problem with standard attempts to distinguish Gingrich from Wright is the whole idea that the tabloid crime of "lining your pockets" is the worst thing a politician can do—the idea that pursuing money unethically is more objectionable than pursuing power unethically. It's the latter abuse that the Gingrich investigation will focus on. The special counsel will see if Gingrich's college tele-course illegally used tax-exempt contributions to advance political causes (e.g., Gingrich). The counsel may also look into the Federal Election Commission's lawsuit against GOPAC, the group Gingrich headed until recently. For years GOPAC kept its contributors secret—which means that, by law, it had to confine its activities to state and local elections. The FEC says it broke this law. And, according to a recent *New York Times* analysis of GOPAC papers, Gingrich has virtually admitted as much. In a 1989 meeting he said that, though GOPAC focused mostly on local races, it was spending "a lot of our resources" on winning control of the House.

Republicans finally did win control of the House. And, if Gingrich is to be believed, it was a momentous win, a sea change for the nation. Well, if that's even half true—even one-tenth true—then whether the victory came ethically would seem to matter. The idea behind democracy is that different ideologies compete for public support by agreed-upon rules. If one side wins a watershed battle by breaking the rules, doesn't that tend to defeat the purpose? Mightn't that even be a larger corruption than Jim Wright's taking home an extra helping of special-interest pork in exchange for some cash on the side?

The conservative attempt to focus on whether Gingrich "lined his pockets" rests on prevailing cynicism about election campaigns. They're so dishonest when strictly legal that it's hard to imagine illegality corrupting them much more. A fair point, perhaps. But if so, then we should be paying more attention to the ethics of seeking power, not less.

When it comes to obtaining money unethically, Jim Wright was miles ahead of Gingrich. But the key word is "miles"; though there was a large quantitative difference, it's still not clear there was a sharp qualitative difference. When it comes to obtaining *power* unethically, Gingrich seems to be ahead of Wright. Which man, on balance, is the more corrupt or pernicious is debatable. But one moral of the story is clear: never award the trophy for least ethical Speaker of the century until the century is over.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JANUARY 1, 1996

CAPITAL CRIMES

At the insistence of its supply-side wing—yes, there still is one, intellectual discredit doesn't always bring political ruin—Republican budget negotiators are insisting upon indexing the capital gains tax for inflation. It's not surprising that GOP hard liners are pushing a tax provision that almost exclusively benefits the rich; they've been doing so for years. But in this case they seem to have found a way to do it that contradicts almost every economic argument they've made in the last decade.

What does it mean to index the capital gains tax for inflation? Suppose you bought stock five years ago for $100 and sold it today for $120. In the meantime, inflation totaled 10 percent, so the real gain on your investment was only $10. Under current law, you would pay tax on the whole $20 gain. Newt says that's unfair. If he succeeds in indexing the tax, you would only pay tax on the inflation-adjusted $10 gain.

There are two main arguments against this idea (and even stronger ones against the manner in which the Republicans are implementing it—more on that later). First, it would complicate the tax code in ways too numerous to recount. Suppose you buy into a self-reinvesting mutual fund that you sell after ten years. Instead of simply paying the capital gains tax on the net increase in value, you would have to make separate calculations for each stock added to the portfolio over all forty quarters, taking into account the value of inflation when each was purchased. Inevitably, smaller investors wouldn't bother. Only those who stood to gain enough to make all the work worthwhile would end up benefiting.

There's a second objection: other investments aren't indexed for inflation. When you borrow money to buy stock, you don't account for inflation on the interest you pay. Go back to that $100 stock. Suppose you borrowed $100 to buy it. Now inflation is working in your favor, eating away at the value of the interest you're paying. But you could still deduct the full value of the interest payment on your taxes, not just the lower, inflation-adjusted, "real" interest payment. This inconsistency creates incentives for tax shelters, encouraging needless borrowing to take advantage of the discrepancy.

Now, you could argue that indexing capital gains is worth more paperwork and tax scams. But congressional Republicans are hardly in a position to make this claim. The GOP, remember, is now the party of tax reform. To eliminate the present system's complexity and loopholes, they insist that the tax code be *completely replaced.* If tax simplification is so important that it warrants eliminating the tax code, you'd think it would outweigh the shaky merits of indexing capital gains.

To be fair, congressional Republicans have taken steps to prevent shelter mania. They have required that any capital gains that receive the benefit of indexing be held for three years prior to sale. In theory, this would drive out the quickest capital gains tax shelters. But hold on. The best argument against the capital gains tax is that it discourages investors from selling assets and thus keeps dollars tied up in less productive endeavors. This is called the "lock-in effect." If the capital gains tax were cut, Republicans have long argued, investors would freely move their capital according to the dictates of the market, and the economy would grow as a result. Assume that's right. Now Congress wants to provide stockholders with a financial carrot to hold on to their stock for at least three years. This would create a more powerful "lock-in effect" than a capital gains tax, by far. Where are the cries of outrage from *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page? *This was the whole reason for cutting the capital gains tax in the first place.* Are the supply-siders really willing to abandon long-held positions at the first hint of money in the hand? Forget stimulating the economy. There's gold in that thar Hill.

This left one problem for Congress: billions in lost revenue. So Congress decided that indexing would not take effect until 2004. Investors could pay the capital gains tax on an asset beforehand without selling it in order to enjoy the benefit of indexing on an already-held asset. Thus, with the three-year minimum, everyone would want to pay the tax in 2001 to start getting indexed in 2004. The mad rush of capital gains taxes paid that year would show up in a gusher of government revenues for 2002. Does that year ring a bell? It's the date Gingrich promised the budget would be balanced. That year, the government would take in a projected $10 billion extra from the capital gains tax. Congressional projections only extend seven years. After that, indexing would *lose* at least $5 billion a year. But, after all, the Contract signers only promised that the budget would be balanced in seven years. They didn't say what would happen after that. •

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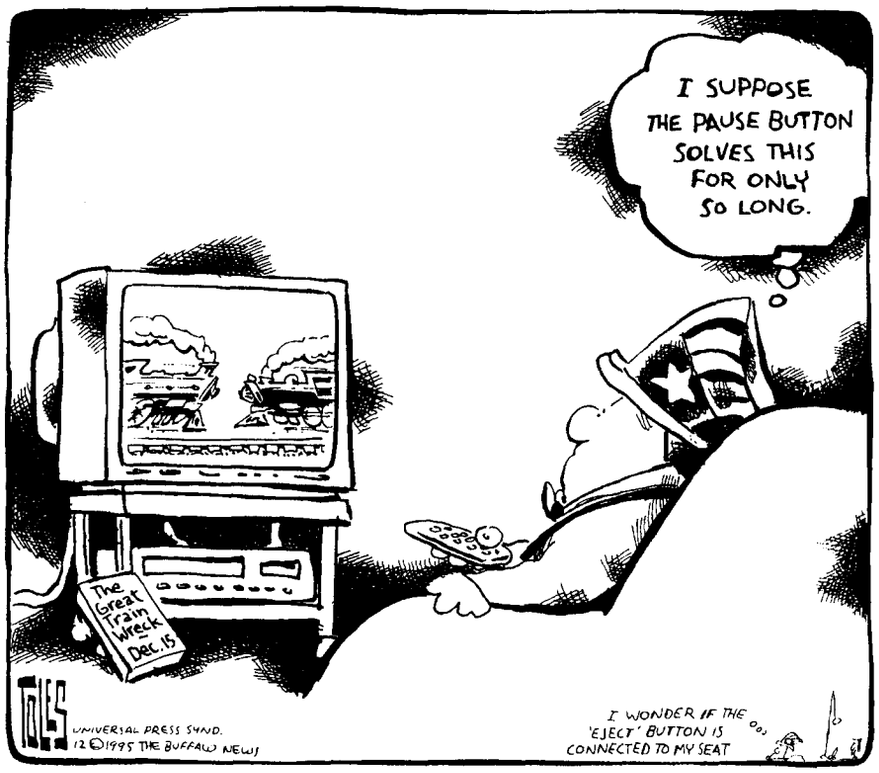
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* detailed X-rated links on the Internet that can be reached from congressional web sites.... A Waukesha, Wisconsin, woman allegedly suffering from multiple personality syndrome argued for leniency after one of her ten personalities stole more than $150,000 from her employer without the others supposedly knowing.... Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary said she made a costly trip to the Taj Mahal to discuss coal burning.... A teenage boy who publicly requested get-well cards during his bout with cancer has received 170 million of them since 1989.... During last month's government shutdown, 300 National Park Service employees traveled to Walt Disney World to attend such lectures as "The Power of Magic in Shaping History" and "Goofy (and Educational) Nature Songs".... Holiday gift idea: "Doctor Dreadful Squeem Lab," a toy that lets children pump and eat sweetened slime from the belly of a spider, the rotting teeth of an alien and the nose of a mummy.


I SUPPOSE THE PAUSE BUTTON SOLVES THIS FOR ONLY SO LONG.
The Great Train Wreck Dec. 15
TOLES
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYND.
12©1995 THE BUFFALO NEWS
I WONDER IF THE 'EJECT' BUTTON IS CONNECTED TO MY SEAT

BROWNSHIRTS, PINK TRIANGLES: The military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy has taken on a new meaning in the aftermath of the cold-blooded murder of two black residents of Fayetteville, North Carolina, by two white-supremacist soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg. One of the accused murderers, Private James Norman Burmeister II, reportedly displayed a Nazi flag over his bed in addition to renting a room in a mobile home where police found Nazi and white-supremacist literature. According to spokesmen for the armed forces, military authorities are prohibited under the First Amendment from expelling soldiers who are members of extremist hate groups, as long as their membership is not "active." Under today's regulations, therefore, a soldier who tells his commanding officer, "I am gay," will be automatically discharged, whereas a soldier who tells a superior, "I am a member of the American Nazi Party and a believer in the ideals of Adolf Hitler," will be allowed to serve. This awkward distinction extends to investigations. While the Pentagon has devoted vast resources to uncovering and persecuting law-abiding and patriotic homosexual soldiers, it has until this week managed to overlook a flourishing subculture of white terrorists within U.S. military ranks, including the Fayetteville murderers, the two former Army soldiers indicted in the April 19 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City and a sinister club at Fort Bragg called the "Special Forces Underground" that discreetly publishes a newsletter called "The Resister" that opposes "liberalism, altruism, internationalism, tribalism, democracy." Far-right soldiers from Fort Bragg reportedly network with one another at underground skinhead bars in Fayetteville. If they were gay bars, the Pentagon might have noticed.

RICH IRONY: In this issue, we argue that the GOP's insistence on indexing the capital gains tax for inflation is a regressive, hypocritical tax cut. But according to Congress, it's a progressive tax increase. Given this Congress's loud devotion to fiscal honesty—it indignantly refuses to accept the White House's "phony" budget numbers—this exercise in disinformation is noteworthy. Seeking to refute charges that its tax cut is tilted toward the rich, the Republican-dominated Joint Committee on Taxation has produced an analysis showing that 80 percent of the benefits from their tax cut go to those earning under $100,000 a year. This required some Orwellian leaps. The indexing provision, to take just one example, encourages taxpayers to fork over billions in capital gains taxes in 2002 so they can save many more billions later. In the short run, and Congress is only counting the short run, it means more voluntary revenue from the capital gains tax. Conveniently forgetting their passionate assertions that capital gains accrue to the beleaguered middle class, Republican number-crunchers reason that since the capital gains tax is, in fact, mostly paid by the rich, this giveaway counts as a tax

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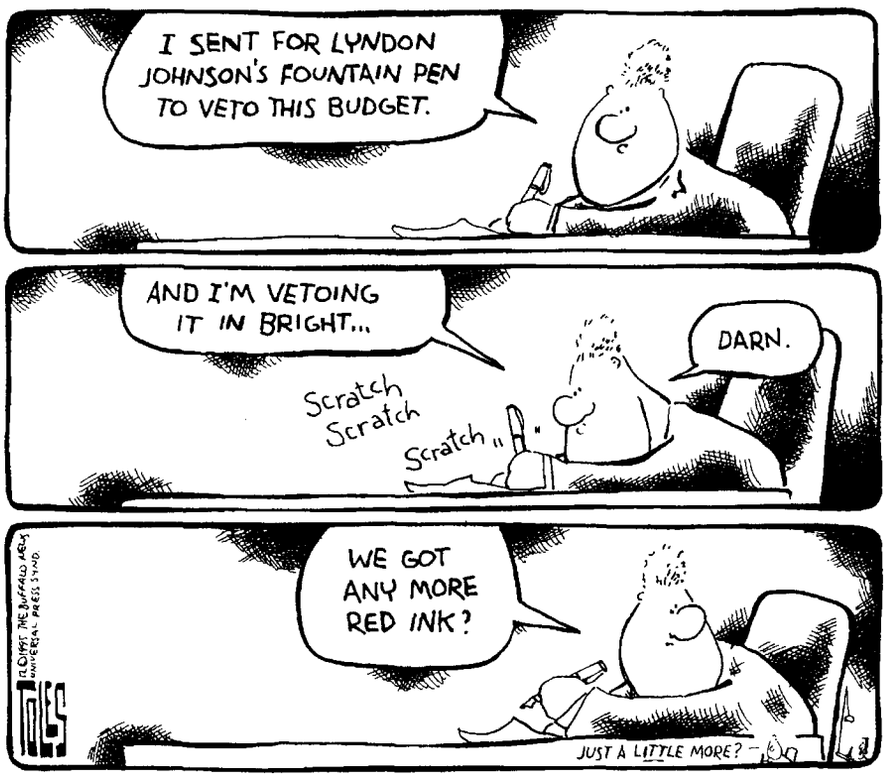
hike on the wealthy. Who says the revolution doesn't believe in shared sacrifice?

FRESHMAN FUNDS: As they gear up for the coming budget Armageddon, the seventy-three Republican House freshmen remain united in their indignant crusade to reform Congress and restore America's moral greatness. But after a year in Washington, their self-righteous rhetoric has lost some of its luster. Of course, the pitiful saga of Enid Waldholtz—the family values champion who filed for divorce within hours of her husband's mysterious disappearance—ignominiously tops the list. But don't forget to add Jim Bunn of Oregon and Jon Christensen of Nebraska, two of the loudest pounders on the morality drums, to the divorce file. North Carolina's David Funderburk denied changing seats with his wife to escape responsibility for an October car accident, although he pleaded "no contest" to the charge. More pervasive, however, and damning, is the familiar influence of big money on the members of the class of 1994. Waldholtz admits her race was won with illegitimate funds. The FEC is scrutinizing a shady $40,000 loan to Idaho's vitriolic Helen Chenoweth. As a whole this class is collecting campaign contributions faster than any first-termers in history, casting some doubt on their promises to be citizen legislators, uninterested in long, corrupting stints in Washington and therefore immune to its special interests. Ah, the idealism of youth.


I SENT FOR LYNDON JOHNSON'S FOUNTAIN PEN TO VETO THIS BUDGET.
AND I'M VETOING IT IN BRIGHT...
DARN.
Scratch Scratch Scratch
WE GOT ANY MORE RED INK?
JUST A LITTLE MORE?
TOLES

ROLL OF SHAME: The Senate this week came within three votes of endorsing a flag burning amendment to the United States Constitution, which would almost certainly have been ratified by the states. The Republicans' demagoguery in this drama—a fitting complement to the Democrats' entitlements tub-thumping—was particularly depressing. And it exposes their recent attempts to pose as principled defenders of the First Amendment in the hate speech and TV violence debates as a charade. Four heroic Republicans voted against the amendment, and their names should be honored by schoolchildren across the land: Robert Bennett of Utah, John Chafee of Rhode Island, James Jeffords of Vermont and Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who led the loyal opposition. Meanwhile, fourteen posturing Democrats broke ranks to support the amendment, including self-styled constitutionalists such as Robert Byrd and Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, Howell Heflin of Alabama, Sam Nunn of Georgia and Dianne Feinstein of California, all of whom should be barred in perpetuity from quoting James Madison on the Senate floor. Senator Dole promises the amendment will be back in 1997, which is about as good a case as could be made for a Democratic Congress.

HOME NEWS: In this issue, Glenn Loury writes an essay about the acute dilemma of black Americans faced with the criminal crisis of the inner city. We're delighted to announce that it also marks his coming to THE NEW REPUBLIC as a contributing editor. A professor of economics at Boston University, Loury has written for TNR (and many other publications) for several years, casting a searingly honest, judicious and passionate eye on racial and economic issues. We're delighted and honored to have him aboard.

TRANSPORTATION NEWS:

Survey Finds Dirtier Subways After Cleaning Jobs Were Cut

—*The New York Times*, November 22.

Larger Kangaroos Leap Farther, Researchers Find

—*The Los Angeles Times*, November 2.

(Thanks to a zillion readers and Glenn Krinsky of Studio City, California, respectively.)

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THE DEAL

By Matthew Cooper

Bill Clinton was blunt with Newt Gingrich. When the two were talking privately on the phone last week about the prospect of yet another government shutdown, the president grew plaintive. "Let's not do this when we have a gun to our head," Clinton said. According to those privy to the conversation, the Speaker was noncommittal about closing the government. But despite the martial metaphors, the chemistry between the two had clearly changed—and for the better. Gone was the belligerent gritting of teeth that had marked other calls.

That's not surprising. The hydraulic pressure in Washington is pushing both sides toward a budget deal. "I don't know what the atmosphere is now," Dan Rostenkowski told me. "But I think they'll get there." The deal-cutter extraordinaire is 600 miles away, exiled in Chicago, but hey, who can doubt *Rosty* when he spies a deal? After all, the Republicans don't need any more bruising, not after weeks of watching their hopes of a major party realignment seem to slip away. And while some White House advisers are pushing for the president to forget about a budget deal before November 1996 ("Let's make this election about something!" shouts one) the oh-so-responsible types, Leon Panetta and Bob Rubin in particular, run the show. They made their careers by deal-cutting—Panetta in the House, Rubin at Goldman, Sachs. Besides, they want closure lest their beloved bond markets, which have been so very kind to Clinton, rebel. Sure, a deal could still fall apart. More likely, though, both sides will get to "Yes."

All of which leads to an interesting question: If there's a budget deal, what's left to talk about in 1996? After all, if Dole and Newt sign a compromise, it's going to be tough to campaign against Clinton as a tax-and-spend lefty. Likewise, if the president cuts Medicare and ends welfare, how can he whine about how Congress is out of tune with "our values"? Clinton's first budget passed without the GOP. Not a Jeffords or a Chafee broke ranks. This time, like Thelma and Louise, Clinton and the Republicans will go off the cliff together.

At the White House, they're starting—just starting—to think about the world after a budget deal. Clinton himself has been scribbling thoughts about topics that have long interested him: income inequality, rewarding the industriousness of the working class, creating community. For now he's got the luxury of his preferred method of contemplation: flipping through books, scrawling in longhand, marking up newspaper articles. But in January, he must reveal his vision of a post-budget world. The month demands that he begin his re-election campaign and deliver the State of the Union address.

Work on the big speech is still in its infancy. Cabinet members are, as they do every year, sending in their self-serving sound bites. ("Nothing is more important than our veterans, I therefore propose. . . .") But money really is tight this year. And Clinton will use the speech to present what aides call a vision of "a limited, reinvented, but compassionate government," or what might be called, for lack of a better term, the do-the-right-thing budget. The president will try to use minimal monies to promote the best public behavior. Much of the thinking on the road ahead is being done by adviser Bruce Reed. One typical theme will be Clinton's defense of pension funds. Last week the Labor Department began pushing corporations to make their employees' 401K contributions quickly, rather than letting them ride for ninety days—in effect, an interest-free loan allowed under current law. "It's using public actions," a Clintonite says, "to leverage private responsibility."

As the State of the Union draws near, aides expect Clinton to, no doubt, get into one of his fabled think-a-thons. Look for him to draw intellectual succor from no fewer than four defenses of government due out this winter. There's Hillary Clinton's almost completed *It Takes a Village* (a treatise on children-and-family policy) and James Carville's *We're Right, They're Wrong* (a blistering defense of Democrats). Look for Clinton to dip into the works of two of his favorite journalists, E.J. Dionne's reflections on the Democrats, *They Only Look Dead*, and Jacob Weisberg's *In Defense of Government*. Always, Clinton will be conscious of the budget. "The bully pulpit becomes really important," says a Clinton administration official, "when you don't have a lot of money."

On the GOP side, the post-budget atmosphere will just add to the gang-up on Bob Dole. Phil Gramm, Steve Forbes, Pat Buchanan and Lamar Alexander—each is likely to attack the budget deal as a sellout. Look for Dole to be himself, huffing about "leadership" and "the tough choices." Eventually, Dole advisers expect, social issues will come to the fore. Indeed, a Gallup Poll out this week showing drugs, of all things, as the number-two concern of Americans, behind crime, underscored the continuing importance of the social issue. "Hollywood is a gateway," says a senior Dole adviser, referring to the Kansan's recent swipes at the film industry. "But it's not the whole thing. It's a nexus of issues—drugs, crime, family breakup—that can loosely be called moral decay."

Great: a year of Dole, the divorcé, lecturing us on family breakup. It's enough to make one pine for . . . well, 1992. For all its Gennifer-with-a-G faults, the last election was exhilarating by this year's standards. Maybe voters emerging from a successful but unsatisfying war

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Where the Money Went

We are often told that per-pupil spending has doubled in real terms over the last 25 years but the investment hasn't produced academic gains. So why should we keep throwing good money after bad? The negative equation—more spending equals no greater student achievement—fits right in with the current anti-government mood. Why should taxpayers play Santa Claus? But the math is wrong, as researchers from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) demonstrate in a new study.

The study, "Where's the Money Gone?: Changes in the Level and Composition of Education Spending," shows that while spending has gone up since the 1960s, much of the growth was soaked up by price inflation in the goods and services schools purchased. Furthermore, most of the remaining dollars went for programs schools had never provided before. Most of the budget used to go straight into the core academic program, but schools began directing an increasing share to new responsibilities the courts and Congress mandated for students with special needs. Many were children with severe disabilities who would not even have been in school in an earlier era.

To get a clearer picture of what happened to education costs, researchers Richard Rothstein and Karen Hawley Miles looked in detail at how a representative group of nine school districts (large, small; rich, poor; fast-growing, slow-growing; rural, suburban, urban) spent their money between 1967 and 1991. They analyzed expenditures receipt by receipt. This enabled them to pinpoint how inflation worked on each district's budget. They found that the Consumer Price Index (CPI)—the usual gauge of education inflation—didn't match what was happening to costs. The districts were having to spend more just to stay even.

It's not that critics deliberately misstate the case. But even though schools received a 100 percent funding increase over 25 years based on the CPI, they can't buy twice the amount of teaching, supervision, textbooks, and support services that they bought before. The study shows that, when inflation is accounted for, per-pupil spending actually grew by 61 percent. Schools can buy 61 percent more now than they could 25 years ago—still a substantial increase, but not double the amount.

What did schools do with the additional money? Here's what the researchers found when they sorted expenditures in the nine districts by program: The overall share of per-pupil spending going to "regular" education—the instructional program for most students—dropped from 80 percent to 59 percent, while the share for special education grew from 4 percent to 17 percent. By 1991, special education and other targeted programs (including bilingual, vocational, and compensatory education; desegregation; dropout prevention; school lunch; and alternative education) had received about 60 percent of all new school funding. Special education alone accounted for 38 percent; regular classrooms received only 28 percent.

The overwhelming majority of students received a relatively small amount of schools' additional spending.

This means that the overwhelming majority of students in public schools received a relatively small amount—1 percent per year—of the schools' additional spending over a long period of time. Disabled students, students in poverty, and students with special problems got more money, and there have been increases in their achievement levels. Although there's still a long way to go, test scores of poor and minority students have risen steadily relative to those of middle-class students. High school graduation rates of minority and white students are converging. And educational possibilities unimaginable only two decades ago have been opened for millions of youngsters with disabilities.

These gains haven't come cheap. New York City, for example, spends $5,200 per pupil in regular education but $23,600 per pupil in special education. Districts are sometimes required to spend $50,000-$100,000 on a single student. The urban districts in the EPI study poured almost all of their new resources into special programs rather than into regular education; one put 18 percent into feeding programs alone. The suburban districts showed the same trend, but they had enough money to increase spending on regular education as well.

What about teacher salaries? They represented a relatively stable share of spending in the nine districts. Schools hired many new teachers trained in working with students with special needs. But growth in the budget share going to salaries didn't come from staffing; it was just that over time there were more senior teachers than junior teachers being paid, so the average salary level went up. In reality, the salaries of most teachers barely kept pace with the CPI and some fell behind.

The large sums being spent on special education undoubtedly are a response to the fact that nothing at all was spent on these youngsters before. It may be time to pause and reevaluate special education's role in driving school costs. But we aren't getting any help from the critics. As long as they keep promoting the false equation of higher spending with poor achievement, we'll never get to the real, much more difficult, problem: How should we reshape our education priorities to make America's schools second to none in academic excellence?

For a copy of "Where's the Money Gone," send a check for $12 to Economic Policy Institute, Suite 1200, 1660 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

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and mired in a seemingly endless recession were more reflective in 1991 than today's Americans, who, in a humming economy, have the luxury of thinking that dope is what plagues us most. Four years ago this winter, voters got plans, not bromides. Clinton gushed ideas from apprenticeship programs to community policing. Buchanan, love him or hate him, offered a compelling alternative to George Bush's hypocritical tax hikes and his giddy internationalism. Paul Tsongas talked deficits; Jerry Brown jawboned campaign reform. All said, it wasn't so bad. No wonder turnout shot up.

This time, though, what's left? The plausible Republicans—Dole, Gramm and Alexander—share a depressing conformity. Each is for flattening taxes, cutting government—all the questions that will have been largely settled by a budget agreement. It's cliché, but true: the intellectual energy of a Jack Kemp, Bill Bennett or, alas, Newt isn't there. And Clinton, for his part, has of yet no "Putting People First" for the Age of Newt. Considering that much of Clinton's agenda faltered during the Age of Foley, you know he's got a long way to go. That Clinton adviser may, sadly, be right. Without a budget deal, the election would be "about something." With a deal, it could be dismal. •

ON THE HILL

AFTER BOB

By Ruth Shalit

In a sudden, not quite expected temperature shift, an arctic political blast is sweeping through the heart of Republican Washington. As the GOP's ratings plummet and promising young freshwomen douse themselves with paraffin on C-SPAN, congressional Republicans have fallen back on more conventional parlor games. "The positioning, the arm-twisting, the one-on-one recruiting started the morning after Bob announced he was running [for president]," says Senator John McCain of Arizona. Sighs Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming: "We have a choice between three, possibly four, very gracious and special men.... If everyone jumps in this thing, it's going to be tough on all of us." Though the contenders officially deny it, the race to succeed Bob Dole as Senate Majority Leader is underway.

After Colin Powell withdrew from the Republican race, handing Dole what seemed to be an unimpeded shot at the nomination, the campaign quietly began. "I fully intend to run for Leader," Senate Majority Whip Trent Lott of Mississippi exclaimed to a reporter from *The Hill* newspaper in mid-November. Lott has since soft-pedaled his career plans, declining to be interviewed for this story. "What with Bosnia and the budget and the other problems the country faces, he feels it's not appropriate to be talking about who's going to be leading down the road," chirps his press secretary, Susan Irby. Others are less coy. "It would be a high honor," declares Senator Thad Cochran, also from Mississippi. "There are those who have talked to me about it and expressed their hopes that I would run. That was very flattering. I was delighted to hear those kind words." Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma, chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, has been similarly overwhelmed. "Several of my colleagues have indicated to me that there may be sentiment ... for my service as Leader," he says, a look of moist wonder on his face. "I was very pleased by that. And I will assess it when a vacancy develops."

Of course, all of this flattered eagerness will seem a bit premature if Bob Dole decides not to step down in order to run. But chances are he will: as Senator Judd Gregg, chief deputy whip and a close Lott ally puts it, "Once he has the nomination, there will be significant pressure on him to concentrate entirely on that." And the shadow Senate race is interesting nonetheless as a window onto the Republican id. With polls showing the tide turning on the Revolution, the GOP's next leadership pick is freighted with symbolic importance. Will queasy lawmakers anoint a septuagenarian power baron, a flashy Newtoid, or a malignant hybrid of the two? In the darkest recesses of the Russell Senate office building, the whispering and handicapping has already begun.

As Senate Majority Whip, Trent Lott would seem Dole's natural heir apparent. The humble-born son of a shipyard pipefitter rose to power in the 1980s as a Conservative Opportunity Society firebrand, working alongside Newt Gingrich to overthrow the House's mellow Republican establishment. In 1994, only six years after his election to the Senate, he vaulted over his genteel elder, Thad Cochran, into the Senate's number-two leadership job after spurning Cochran's advice not to oppose Dole's sidekick Alan Simpson. When Lott became whip, Simpson and others warned of divided loyalties; Lott was close friends with Dole archfoe Phil Gramm. But though Lott remains close to Gramm—even jetting home to Mississippi to introduce the Texas senator at a business luncheon—he has surprised his detractors by proving himself a hardworking, loyal lieutenant to the Leader. "Trent has been a very good assistant to Dole," concedes Simpson today. "He's not tried to usurp his authority or step on his leadership. And that has surprised some people."

In an increasingly cold and prickly Senate, Lott remains a hugger, a convivial schmoozer who greets his colleagues with cries of joy. Lott, gushes Senator Judd Gregg, is "everybody's friend." But some are discomfited by the whip's backslapping gregariousness. "You will hear from a lot of members the following phrase," says an aide to the GOP leadership. " 'I really like Trent. He

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does a good job. *But....*' And you can fill in the blank. There's just something about him. He's regarded as a little too clever, and not as trustworthy. What's behind the glibness and smile?" When news of a boomlet to force Strom Thurmond's retirement as chair of the Armed Services Committee leaked to *Newsweek* in February, Lott was widely fingered for the indiscretion. The questionable largess he has quietly bestowed upon his own state—Amtrak and merchant marine subsidies; a $1.4 billion amphibious ship for his hometown of Pascagoula—hasn't helped matters any. "Many of us who supported [Lott] for whip are not happy with the fact that there is still a lot of pork barrel," says Senator John McCain. "When it happens, it is just so damaging to us. So unbecoming to us as legislators."

"He's not an activist," a Republican Senate staffer confides. "He's conservative, but he's not a Contract conservative. He's not a revolutionary by any stretch of the imagination." Seated in a sumptuously upholstered armchair, silk tie carefully knotted, cufflinks gleaming, Republican Conference Chair Thad Cochran lives up to the billing. "I think there's a tendency among our younger members to think that ideology should always prevail," he says in a slow, honeyed drawl. "But here in the Senate, the institution is designed to make sure individual senators are treated fairly." Even Democrats. "I have a history of getting along with those on the other side," Cochran says. "Because"—the senator's beetling brows narrow—"I don't expect we'll always have a Republican majority."

Cochran looks the way a senator ought to look, with a big jaw, big shoulders and a froggy, downturned mouth. Colleagues describe him as a sort of male Steel Magnolia, an old-fashioned Southern gentleman whose courtliness camouflages an unbending backbone. His instincts are establishment Republican: opposed to the line-item veto because it could "zero out individual defense procurement programs"; enamored of the Senate seniority system; perennially poised to throttle Phil Gramm, whose operating style Cochran "totally rejects," in the words of a Senate GOP aide. When Gramm's senatorial committee unveiled a document called "Seven More in '94," a Contract-inspired laundry list of campaign pledges, Gramm tried to make it an official Senate leadership initiative. It was Cochran who singlehandedly quashed the idea. "Senator Cochran thought this was Gramm trying to upstage Bob Dole, against whom he was already planning to run for president," says Cochran's press secretary, Steve Hayes.

Lott's close ties to Gramm have hardly endeared him to Cochran, Mississippi's senior senator. Neither has his vaulting ambition. "Thad has obviously been here a lot longer," says Senator McCain. "He'd spent many years laboring in the vineyards of Republican politics. Then Trent came along much later and leapfrogged to the number-two position." Cochran, for his part, denies any tension. "We're a dynamite combination for Mississippi," he says. "I don't know of any two senators from any state that have a better personal relationship than we do." But the jockeying over leadership jobs has clearly left feelings raw. "Trent talked to me last year about his candidacy for whip," he says with mild irritation. "I discouraged him from running against Al Simpson, because Al Simpson is one of my best friends in the Senate." Cochran shakes his head. "I was also worried about how it would affect the presidential campaign of Bob Dole. It seemed to me that since Trent was one of Phil Gramm's closest friends, his [candidacy for whip] would be perceived as part of Phil's election campaign. And in fact, that's the way it turned out." A frown darkens Cochran's nobly furrowed face. "Phil Gramm and a few of his close friends continue to make it appear that Bob isn't the best possible Leader in the Senate," he grouses. "They continue to affect the Leader's effort to bring consensus and get our cause advanced." Is the majority whip part of this mutinous coterie? Cochran demurs. "Trent Lott," he says again, "is clearly one of Phil Gramm's best friends. When Trent has got his best friend doing things that make it difficult for us to act in concert in terms of our leader's position, it makes it very difficult for us to function as a cohesive Republican conference. And that's something that has been very awkward for me to deal with."

A third combatant, who could emerge with the prize if the squalling Southerners knock each other out, is Oklahoma Senator Don Nickles. Though Nickles's conservative voting record is nearly identical to Lott's, his poker-faced Midwestern reserve is seen as an antidote to the whip's breeziness. "Lott is aggressive on the TV shows," says a Senate GOP staffer. "Nickles is—behind the scenes." If Lott is, in Hedrick Smith's lexicon, the quintessential Capitol Hill showhorse, Nickles is the workhorse, hammering out in furtive conferences the grubby details of the GOP wish list. On the day of our interview, he greets me in shirtsleeves, then diplomatically skirts the issue of his upward mobility. "I don't talk to the press, really, about leadership races," he says. "I have been involved in some of them. They're very interesting. Very internal. Very complex."

Senator Donald Nickles—he has no middle name—is a wiry, youngish man, with close-cropped good looks and a pleasant, affectless manner. Even his office, with its worn blue sofas and skimpy plants, suggests a thrifty, bare-bones rectitude. After much cajoling, he finally makes a rather antiseptic pitch for Dole's job. "We want to balance the budget," he says. "If we have the Dole administration, I think we will. That means lower interest rates. Less government regulation.... It would really be a fantastic opportunity. And I would love to be involved in that as Leader."

Though he campaigns in Oklahoma as a populist candidate attacking the system, Nickles's operating style within the institution has been unfailingly reserved and gentlemanly. Earlier this year, for instance, he maneuvered quietly to thwart the efforts of his wrathful colleagues—Trent Lott included—to punish balanced-budget apostate Mark Hatfield by divesting him of his

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committee chairmanship. All the same, he's no judicious bridge-builder: as chairman of the Policy Committee, an in-house think tank for Senate Republicans, he launches weekly fusillades against Democrats and is a regular guest on rightist talk shows.

Nickles's supporters tout him as a benign hybrid of the Young Turks and old bulls, a consensus candidate with all of Lott's ideological purity and none of his oleaginous glibness. "They're both pretty strong conservatives," says freshman Senator James Inhofe, who backed Lott in his bid to become whip. "But Don [Nickles] somehow goes down easier.... He has stronger feelings coming from the heart." Says Nickles: "I've worked with a lot of the old bulls. I respect them greatly.... But my philosophy is close to that of the revolutionaries."

Meanwhile, even sub-zero temperatures can't stop the politicking. On November 29, *The Hill* floated the notion that none other than New York Senator Alfonse D'Amato might join the fray. Other sleepers for Leader: Senators Orrin Hatch, Pete Domenici, Ted Stevens. *Ted Stevens*? "I sense a certain, uh, restiveness among some of the Republicans about the current choices," admits Senator McCain. "I'm not sure people are totally satisfied with what they see.... But I haven't heard of anyone else stepping forward." Where's Colin Powell when you need him? •

On the beat in D.C.

Cops

By Hanna Rosin

Officer Keith DeVille is standing at the edge of the banquet room of the Day's Inn, northeast Washington D.C., surveying all the assholes. His word choice, and at the moment it covers everyone but his fellow rank-and-file cops. That means all the chirping wives and doughy relatives chomping on chicken and whooping at every joke the new police chief cracks. And it means me. "I hate the frigging media," he yells, responding to my request for an interview. "To you we're just a bunch of Mark Fuhrmans, a bunch of dirty drug dealers on the take."

From his full, sallow face and sparse moustache to the beer in his left hand, DeVille could be a poster boy for clean, fun-loving cops. Except, I soon learn, for one problem. Even before his partner, Scott Lewis, was shot in October, the job was getting to him. "After years of seeing people hate each other and beat each other up," he suddenly confesses, "I shut it all off. I wasn't feeling anything. I have a 9-month-old baby at home. And my wife will see her walk or do something, and she'll just light up, and she'll look at me and there's nothing there. Nothing."

Policing the nation's capital, the murder capital of America, could unhinge the toughest cop. But unlike L.A.'s or Philadelphia's, the city's descent into anarchy can't be pinned on police depravity. No matter how deep you dig, the Metropolitan Police Department is not the LAPD or New York's Harlem District: it's relatively clean and free of racial tension. Without these easy reference points, D.C. becomes a disturbing case study, the control group that lays bare the core of an urban meltdown.

Donald Temple is not your average cop-lover. The militant black lawyer once chaired the Civilian Complaint Review Board, charged with ferreting out bad cops. In his office, decorated with four different murals of Malcolm X, he reviewed with me a year's worth of brutality complaints against the police—an officer who punched an old drunk in the face, another who locked someone in his trunk. But in a whisper of a voice Temple explained why, despite this savagery, the MPD is still virtually spotless: "At the street level, it can be equally brutal, but it's not equally problematic. You have places like Philly, or New Orleans, where things are really vicious. But in D.C. you don't have that kind of corruption. For one thing, the caliber of leadership is noteworthy. And there's really no organized crime here ... so there's not much opportunity for organized payoffs." Racial enmity is also low. The force is 70 percent black, through the ranks, and, Temple says, "problems are rooted out early."

Strip away Rodney King and the Philadelphia Vice Squad, and maybe you get to the heart of the thing: the slow and toxic meltdown of what people care about and what they are scared of. DeVille touched on this, haltingly, in a later interview: "Nobody on the street fears anything, not the police or the judicial system or even death."

So why, then, does anyone join the force? When you ask the officers, they conjure up visions of Andy Griffith's Mayberry, a world where citizens saluted the flag and smiling angels in blue helped schoolkids cross the street. "It was always a childhood dream of mine," recalls Gary Nelson, a black police officer from the fifth district who grew up in D.C. "I remember thinking the officers in my neighborhood represented all that was right. Everyone in the community respected them as figures of authority, and they were there to help out." Scott Lewis used to worship the local cops, his mother said. When he was 5 he'd dress up in a police uniform, get on his plastic motorcycle and follow them around.

This myth of respect for the badge was cruelly punctured over the last few years by several murders of local cops. Of the eight officers killed in the last two years, only one went down confronting street thugs. The rest were snuck up on, targeted just for their uniforms. John Novabilski was sprayed by machine-gun fire through his car window while sitting in a parking lot. Hank Daly and two FBI agents were shot by a man who stormed into police headquarters one afternoon dressed in a suit and

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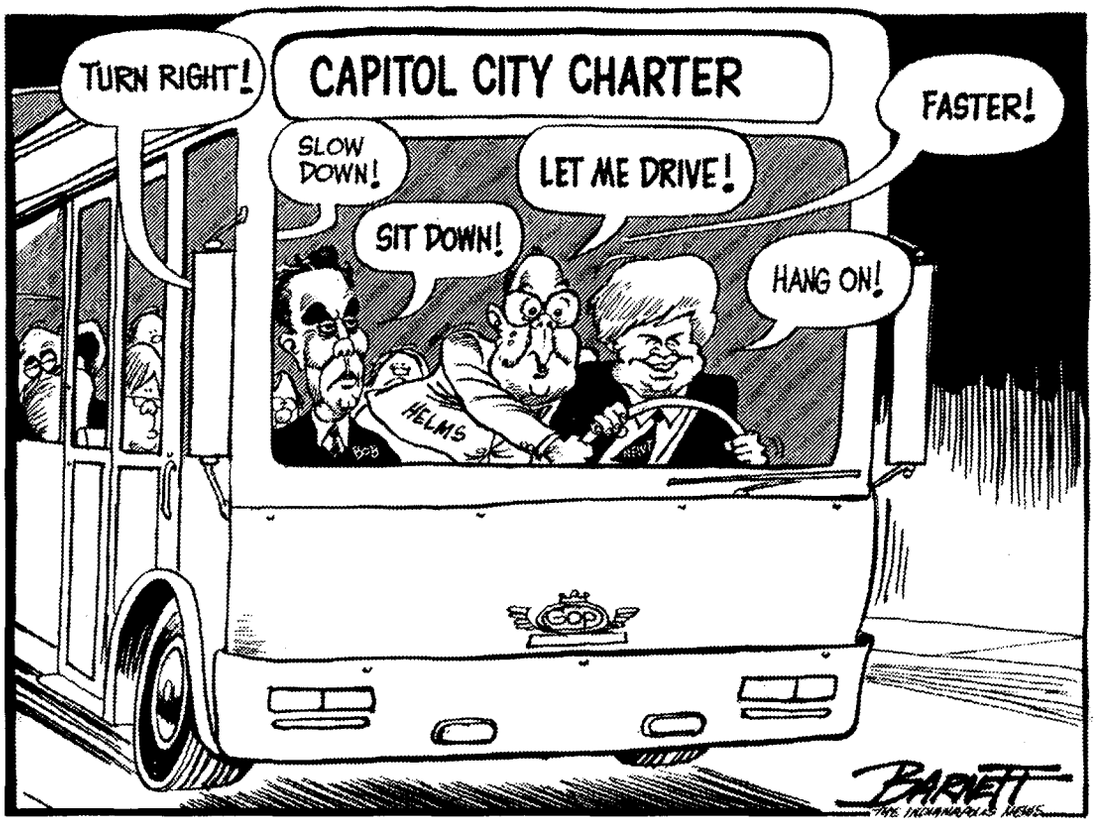

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armed with a Tech-9. "I expect the unexpected," says DeVille. "But this—just being ambushed—I can't expect. Because you wear a uniform you are the enemy. And I will shoot you, without a word. You're not a human being. You're a cop."

At about 2 a.m. on October 6, Scott Lewis was standing on H Street, helping out a deaf driver. DeVille was leaning against his car, arms folded, watching Lewis and the deaf man pass notes back and forth. A Honda Accord pulled up between them. The driver rolled down his window and said to DeVille, "Hey, you know that guy's deaf?" and DeVille responded, "Yeah, do you know what's wrong?" Then the driver got out with his back to DeVille. DeVille heard his partner say, "Oh, that's what the problem is," and "that was the last thing he ever said," DeVille recalls. "I saw his arm come up and the son of a bitch shot Scott right in the head, *bam*, from about a foot away. Scott never knew what happened." The rest is hazy. As DeVille recalls, the driver shot at him across the car five times and missed, and he shot back, finally killing the shooter. Lewis, 28, died three days later. The shooter turned out to be Melvin Darnell Pate, high on PCP, the autopsy report showed. He'd caused a scene a few weeks earlier in a courtroom when his brother was convicted on drug charges, then repeatedly bragged to friends about wanting to kill a cop.

For now, DeVille is taking time off. Since the shooting, he's fluctuated between "being afraid every time [he] walks around the corner" to "feeling invincible, like I could walk into a hail of bullets, and you'll miss me every time"—both of which are dangerous delusions for a police officer. But eventually, he says, he'll return, because of that other feeling every cop would be lying if he didn't admit to: "In a perverse way, it's fun," he says. "You get that call and boom, you're gone, the adrenaline rush, sirens blaring, driving ninety miles an hour trying to catch the bad guys."

A few days after talking to DeVille, I rode with a cruiser that covers his and Lewis's old beat. My escort was George Phifer, a white officer with a preternaturally calm temperament. Phifer rides the power shift, 4:30 to 3 a.m., in a place called Trinidad, ten square blocks of burnt-out brownstones and charred alleys, the homicide heart of the city. All night long the radio crackles—"female fighting female," "accident down on Morton,"—but the power shift cruisers only have to answer Code 1s—high-end crimes. The rest of the time they scout the neighborhood, picking up clues on who controls what blocks, where the drugs are hidden. In Trinidad citizens treat the cops, to use Marion Barry's phrase, as an "occupying army." As we approach one corner, an old man in a blue Nike hat—the lookout—yells "5-0" to warn the others. (The code comes from *New Jack City* and, before that, "Hawaii 5-0.")

The cops think of Trinidad as a haunted city, and they are the guides to its horror spots. At this blue house, Phifer tells me, three teens were shot last week for owing a man $40. Lighting up the door with his spotlight, he remembers "the door swinging in the breeze, three bodies stacked up like wood." That door with the foil Santa Claus, that's where a boy stabbed his own grandfather to death, while his grandmother watched. "We Love Chukie," the graffitied wall reads, from the time Antoine killed his best friend, Chuckie, over a bet. The worst was on that corner, four years ago. Some dealers caught an old junkie stealing their loot. They chased him down, then poured battery acid over his head. It ate off his flesh, bleaching his black face a ghostly white, melting his eyes, nose and ears into glue.

It's easy to see why the citizens of Trinidad might feel hassled by the police. At about 7 p.m. a radio call catches Phifer's attention: "Black male in a leather jacket, aged 13-14, carrying a weapon, two others with him, don't know at this time if they're armed." We cruise to the location, just in time to see someone who fits the description slink into the ABC market, a well-known dealing spot. Phifer stops the car, jumps out, gun pointing. "Let me see your hands," he yells, "your hands," and pins the boy against the wall. He searches him and finds only a walkman. Wrong guy. Up close you can see his jacket is down, not leather.

These miscues are the downside of intuition. This boy was on the right block at the wrong time, and it's hard to tell down from leather in the dark. Later that night, three cruisers swoop in on a beat-up Ford that's been weaving and ducking into alleys. It turns out all he's got is a bottle of Colt 45 malt liquor and some cigars, so they let him go.

Phifer can be blithe about harassing the wrong man, and it's not just a matter of professional expediency. After years of working in a place like Trinidad, a cop's conception of innocence becomes slippery. The officers rarely refer to the dead as victims. Phifer says it's because these casualties have "scarred pasts." DeVille describes the phenomenon like this: "We will drive down the street and classify everyone we see: stick-up boy. Drug dealer, asshole, whatever. When we have a victim of crime, we don't say that's a terrible thing. We say if you weren't involved in this, that wouldn't have happened to you. It's not because we're callous and unfeeling. It's because if we don't do that, we're gonna turn into vegetables."

At 8 p.m. the radio spits out a double homicide, on Abbey Street. The sirens click on and we're off, about 70 miles an hour. When we get there, the thing is pretty much wrapped up. The first person I see is a woman in a floppy denim hat, wailing loudly, tugging at a brick post as if she could shake it loose. A homicide squad mills around the ambulance, along with a dozen kids bundled in down coats. When they clear away I catch a glimpse of the dead body. He is propped up against a fence, half covered by a white sheet, an arm and two legs sticking out.

The cops approach their task with dispassionate professionalism, sticking to the details. "He must have been driving down this way and the shooter snuck up from over there," one says. It seems a dealer from one

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crew snuck up on two from another crew, one in his car and another walking. The driver survived and was rushed to the hospital. The walker is the one under the sheet.

A group of old women cluster behind the yellow tape, talking about the dead boy as if they were gabbing about a granddaughter's boyfriend. "Which is he, the handsome dark-skinned one?" asks one. "Yeah, Tyrell, the one who walked funny, always looking down," answers another. As I stood staring at the body, one of the cops I knew came over. "You ready?" he asked. "Because I'm starved." •

A day in the life of black America.

WHO SHOT JOHNNY?

By Debra Dickerson

Given my level of political awareness, it was inevitable that I would come to view the everyday events of my life through the prism of politics and the national discourse. I read *The Washington Post, The New Republic, The New Yorker, Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly, The Nation, National Review, Black Enterprise* and *Essence* and wrote a weekly column for the Harvard Law School Record during my three years just ended there. I do this because I know that those of us who are not well-fed white guys in suits must not yield the debate to them, however well-intentioned or well-informed they may be. Accordingly, I am unrepentant and vocal about having gained admittance to Harvard through affirmative action; I am a feminist, stoic about my marriage chances as a well-educated, 36-year-old black woman who won't pretend to need help taking care of herself. My strength flags, though, in the face of the latest role assigned to my family in the national drama. On July 27, 1995, my 16-year-old nephew was shot and paralyzed.

Talking with friends in front of his home, Johnny saw a car he thought he recognized. He waved boisterously—his trademark—throwing both arms in the air in a full-bodied, hip-hop Y. When he got no response, he and his friends sauntered down the walk to join a group loitering in front of an apartment building. The car followed. The driver got out, brandished a revolver and fired into the air. Everyone scattered. Then he took aim and shot my running nephew in the back.

Johnny never lost consciousness. He lay in the road, trying to understand what had happened to him, why he couldn't get up. Emotionlessly, he told the story again and again on demand, remaining apologetically firm against all demands to divulge the missing details that would make sense of the shooting but obviously cast him in a bad light. Being black, male and shot, he must, apparently, be gang- or drug-involved. Probably both. Witnesses corroborate his version of events.

Nearly six months have passed since that phone call in the night and my nightmarish, headlong drive from Boston to Charlotte. After twenty hours behind the wheel, I arrived haggard enough to reduce my mother to fresh tears and to find my nephew reassuring well-wishers with an eerie sangfroid.

I take the day shift in his hospital room; his mother and grandmother, a clerk and cafeteria worker, respectively, alternate nights there on a cot. They don their uniforms the next day, gaunt after hours spent listening to Johnny moan in his sleep. How often must his subconscious replay those events and curse its host for saying hello without permission, for being carefree and young while a would-be murderer hefted the weight of his uselessness and failure like Jacob Marley's chains? How often must he watch himself lying stubbornly immobile on the pavement of his nightmares while the sound of running feet syncopate his attacker's taunts?

I spend these days beating him at gin rummy and Scrabble, holding a basin while he coughs up phlegm and crying in the corridor while he catheterizes himself. There are children here much worse off than he. I should be grateful. The doctors can't, or won't, say whether he'll walk again.

I am at once repulsed and fascinated by the bullet, which remains lodged in his spine (having done all the damage it can do, the doctors say). The wound is undramatic—small, neat and perfectly centered—an impossibly pink pit surrounded by an otherwise undisturbed expanse of mahogany. Johnny has asked me several times to describe it but politely declines to look in the mirror I hold for him.

Here on the pediatric rehab ward, Johnny speaks little, never cries, never complains, works diligently to become independent. He does whatever he is told; if two hours remain until the next pain pill, he waits quietly. Eyes bloodshot, hands gripping the bed rails. During the week of his intravenous feeding when he was tormented by the primal need to masticate, he never asked for food. He just listened while we counted down the days for him and planned his favorite meals. Now required to dress himself unassisted, he does so without demur, rolling himself back and forth valiantly on the bed and shivering afterwards, exhausted. He "ma'am"s and "sir"s everyone politely. Before his "accident," a simple request to take out the trash could provoke a firestorm of teenage attitude. We, the women who have raised him, have changed as well; we've finally come to appreciate those boxer-baring, oversized pants we used to hate—it would be much more difficult to fit properly sized pants over his diaper.

He spends a lot of time tethered to rap music still loud enough to break my concentration as I read my many magazines. I hear him try to soundlessly mouth the obligatory "mothafuckers" overlaying the funereal dirge of the music tracks. I do not normally tolerate dis-

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respectful music in my or my mother's presence, but if it distracts him now ...

"Johnny," I ask later, "do you still like gangster rap?" During the long pause I hear him think loudly, *I'm paralyzed Auntie, not stupid.* "I mostly just listen to hip hop," he says evasively into his *Sports Illustrated.*

Miserable though it is, time passes quickly here. We always seem to be jerking awake in our chairs just in time for the next pill, his every-other-night bowel program, the doctor's rounds. Harvard feels a galaxy away—the world revolves around Family Members Living With Spinal Cord Injury class, Johnny's urine output and strategizing with my sister to find affordable, accessible housing. There is always another long-distance uncle in need of an update, another church member wanting to pray with us or Johnny's little brother in need of some attention.

We Dickerson women are so constant a presence the ward nurses and cleaning staff call us by name and join us for cafeteria meals and cigarette breaks. At Johnny's birthday pizza party, they crack jokes and make fun of each other's husbands (there are no men here). I pass slices around and try not to think, "17 with a bullet."

Oddly, we feel little curiosity or specific anger toward the man who shot him. We have to remind ourselves to check in with the police. Even so, it feels pro forma, like sending in those $2 rebate forms that come with new pantyhose: you know your request will fall into a deep, dark hole somewhere but, still, it's your duty to try. We push for an arrest because we owe it to Johnny and to ourselves as citizens. We don't think about it otherwise—our low expectations are too ingrained. A Harvard aunt notwithstanding, for people like Johnny, Marvin Gaye was right that only three things are sure: taxes, death and trouble. At least it wasn't the second.

We rarely wonder about or discuss the brother who shot him because we already know everything about him. When the call came, my first thought was the same one I'd had when I'd heard about Rosa Parks's beating: a brother did it. A non-job-having, middle-of-the-day malt-liquor-drinking, crotch-clutching, loud-talking brother with many neglected children born of many forgotten women. He lives in his mother's basement with furniture rented at an astronomical interest rate, the exact amount of which he does not know. He has a car phone, an $80 monthly cable bill and every possible phone feature but no savings. He steals Social Security numbers from unsuspecting relatives and assumes their identities to acquire large TV sets for which he will never pay. On the slim chance that he is brought to justice, he will have a colorful criminal history and no coherent explanation to offer for this act. His family will raucously defend him and cry cover-up. Some liberal lawyer just like me will help him plea bargain his way to yet another short stay in a prison pesthouse that will serve only to add another layer to the brother's sociopathology and formless, mindless nihilism. We know him. We've known and feared him all our lives.

As a teenager, he called, "Hey, baby, gimme somma that boodie!" at us from car windows. Indignant at our lack of response, he followed up with, "Fuck you, then, 'ho!" He called me a "white-boy lovin' nigger bitch oreo" for being in the gifted program and loving it. At 27, he got my 17-year-old sister pregnant with Johnny and lost interest without ever informing her that he was married. He snatched my widowed mother's purse as she waited in pre-dawn darkness for the bus to work and then broke into our house while she soldered on an assembly line. He chased all the small entrepreneurs from our neighborhood with his violent thievery, and put bars on our windows. He kept us from sitting on our own front porch after dark and laid the foundation for our periodic bouts of self-hating anger and racial embarrassment. He made our neighborhood a ghetto. He is the poster fool behind the maddening community knowledge that there are still some black mothers who raise their daughters but merely love their sons. He and his cancerous carbon copies eclipse the vast majority of us who are not sociopaths and render us invisible. He is the Siamese twin who has died but cannot be separated from his living, vibrant sibling; which of us must attract more notice? We despise and disown this anomalous loser but, for many, he *is* black America. We know him, we know that he is outside the fold, and we know that he will only get worse. What we didn't know is that, because of him, my little sister would one day be the latest hysterical black mother wailing over a fallen child on TV.

Alone, lying in the road bleeding and paralyzed but hideously conscious, Johnny had lain helpless as he watched his would-be murderer come to stand over him and offer this prophecy: "Betch'ou won't be doin' nomo' wavin', motha'fucker."

Fuck you, asshole. He's fine from the waist up. You just can't do anything right, can you?

DEBRA DICKERSON is a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

A liberal mistake.

IS EVERYTHING RACE?

By Randall Kennedy

Some liberals appear to have lost the ability to debate public policy without resorting to dubious, formulaic invocations of racial discrimination. The most recent case study in this depressing trend is the debate over the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine. Under federal law a person caught with five grams of crack cocaine goes to jail for five years, while it takes 500 grams of powder cocaine to get the same sentence. The disparity, in

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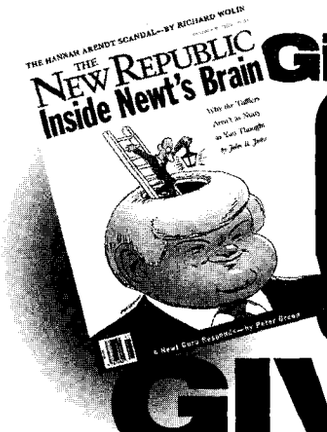

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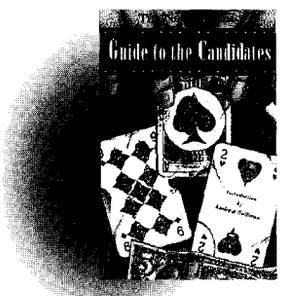

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other words, is 100 to 1. A related disparity is equally striking: nationwide, over 90 percent of those convicted for crack violations are black, while blacks make up only about 30 percent of those convicted for powder violations. These two facts—that crack offenses are the most heavily punished drug crimes and that blacks comprise the overwhelming bulk of crack offenders—have led many liberals to argue that the crack law is racist. Addressing himself to the crack/powder disparity at the Million Man March, Jesse Jackson declared that "[it's] wrong; it's immoral; it's unfair; it's racist; it's ungodly."

I'll let Reverend Jackson determine its godliness. But the racism charge is wrong. This is not to endorse present crack sentencing laws. To the contrary, they should be modified. But a bad law is not necessarily a racist one. And the difference matters.

The claim that crack sentencing laws are racist rests, in part, upon the assumption that crack is really no different than powder, that, as Democratic Representative John Lewis of Georgia puts it, "cocaine is cocaine." This is incorrect: crack is generally cheaper, more addictive, more easily distributed, associated with higher levels of violent crime and thus more socially destructive than powder. In *Against Excess, Drug Policy for Results*, Professor Mark A.R. Kleiman observes that, "in 1978, cocaine was something between a curiosity and a menace.... By 1988, cocaine had become the drug problem par excellence, with a retail market nearly equal to those for heroin and marijuana combined.... How did a minor drug [cocaine] become so major, a seemingly benign drug so horrible? In a word, crack happened." Even the U.S. Sentencing Commission, which generally downplays the differences between crack and powder and recommends eliminating the disparity, admits that "a policymaker could infer that crack cocaine poses greater harms to society than does powder cocaine."

While many now attack the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which originally set different sentences for crack and powder, saying it was the result of white stereotypes of a black criminal menace, eleven of the then twenty black members of Congress supported it. New York Democrat Charles Rangel, who chaired the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, vocally applauded "crack[ing] down on crack" on the grounds that "crack was the newest and most insidious addition to the drug culture ... cheaper than cocaine and more addictive." Alton Waldon, another New York Democrat, declared, "I do not think there is any step we can take that is too swift, too timely, too severe in correcting this evil." Rangel, Waldon and nine other black representatives may have been misguided—but racist?

Still, some contend that, even if the crack law was not racist in its intent, only racism or racial insensitivity can explain Congress's failure to reform it in the light of its racially disparate consequences. "I have never suggested that the motivation ten years ago ... was a racist motivation," North Carolina Democrat Mel Watt declares, but "the impact of this law has been very, very, very substantially racist." This argument assumes that it burdens the black community to sentence crack dealers to long prison terms. But does it? What about the neighbors—probably also black—of those who violate the crack laws? They may well be *helped* by the long absence of offenders who, but for prison terms, might continue to corrupt their streets and children. Those who portray crack dealers as representatives of the entire black community, a status to which Marion Barry, Mike Tyson and O.J. Simpson were also elevated during their brushes with the law, do law-abiding African Americans a disservice.

Conservatives are *right* when they argue that blacks, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, have more to fear from a lenient or indifferent criminal justice system than from one that punishes offenders too harshly. But things only get worse when black politicians respond with the assertion, "How dare *you* tell me how *my* people feel or what is best for them." They are not only trying to hijack debate, but engaging in an ultimately counter-productive political strategy.

The fate of the Sentencing Commission's proposed modification of the crack law is illustrative. The commission concluded that whatever the differences between crack and powder they do not justify the 100 to 1 differential and recommended eliminating the disparity altogether. The recommendation would have gone into effect automatically absent specific disapproval from both houses of Congress. This October, however, Congress rejected the proposal, the first time it has done so in the commission's eleven-year history.

Several factors influenced Congress's decision, including the perceived electoral advantage of seeming tough on crime, the ideological fervor of the new Republican congressional majority and sincere anger at the misery created by drug traffickers. But I suspect that these were buttressed by a defensiveness created precisely because opponents of the current sentencing law branded it (and by implication its backers) as racist. Allegations of racism put into question more than a person's judgment; they put into question a person's basic moral fitness. Once a dispute becomes framed as a matter of fundamental racial justice, considerations of personal honor and public reputation elevate the stakes and polarize the antagonists. Furthermore, given our current racial climate, once a charge of racism is lodged, it tends to dominate other concerns. Instead of determining on a broad basis the relative merits of a policy, discussion is channeled toward the narrow question of whether or not a given policy is racist. During the congressional debate, for example, the commission's strong, non-racial reasons for sentencing reform were overlooked. Beneath the loud allegations of racism, the fact was lost that, under current law, low-level crack dealers sometimes receive longer sentences than their high-level, powder-selling suppliers.

Moreover, by imputing evil intent to one's opponent, the racism charge often shades into a larger, corrupting

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paranoia about the white establishment. "Is there a conspiracy," Democratic Representative Bobby Rush asked during the sentencing debate, "to incarcerate as many African American males as possible?" Such sentiment has led black jurors to acquit clearly guilty criminal defendants to avoid sending more black men to jail. You see its consequences in other areas as well. Take the stifling of intelligent debate over decriminalization of drugs. On one side are claims that the war on drugs is genocidal because a disproportionate number of those subject to arrest, prosecution and incarceration are black. On the other are claims that decriminalizing drug use would amount to genocide because blacks would constitute a disproportionate number of those allowed to pursue their drug habits without deterrent intervention. Both of these claims are without basis. Both illustrate conspiratorial, disparity-mindedness run amok. Both are the products of calculated exaggeration. Both are aimed at short-circuiting rather than deepening discussion.

I do not want to leave the impression that there is no race problem within the administration of criminal justice. There are a good many Mark Fuhrmans in the ranks of the police. Scores of prosecutors daily violate their oaths of office when, for racial reasons, they peremptorily strike potential jurors. Courts authorize the police to treat a person's race—typically blackness—as a proxy for an increased likelihood of misconduct. Therefore, if I, a black man, alight from an airplane, I stand a much greater risk than my white fellow citizen of being stopped and questioned by the Drug Enforcement Administration because courts have permitted it to use blackness as part of its drug courier profile.

Liberals should attack these violations of racial neutrality in the administration of criminal justice and demand that conservatives join with them in doing so. After all, for the past quarter century conservatives have argued that the state should act without regard to race, though they have done so vehemently only in their opposition to affirmative action.

There is, of course, a race problem in the administration of criminal justice—a big one. But that problem resides not in race-neutral legislation such as the crack law, but rather in laws and practices that purposefully treat blacks differently from whites. The crack law, in my view, is overly harsh. Though there should be a difference in punishment between crack and powder because crack is more socially destructive than powder, the current 100 to 1 ratio is too extreme. But by milking overheated and unsupportable racial rhetoric, liberals alienate people whose support they ultimately need to enact sensible reform. Going overboard, making a mistake, even being a damned fool is different from "racism." The difference matters.

RANDALL KENNEDY, Professor of Law at Harvard University, is completing a book on race and the administration of criminal justice.

Between black crime and judicial racism.

THE IMPOSSIBLE DILEMMA

By Glenn Loury

America has a violent crime problem. It is, to a substantial degree, concentrated in this country's central cities. And black Americans, disproportionately concentrated in these dangerous environments, bear its brunt. In 1992, black males 12 to 19 years old were 25 percent more likely to be victims of crime than whites of their age group. Young black females (largely as the result of sexual assault) were 70 percent more likely than their white counterparts. The murder rate among black youths (persons under age 20), which was already three times that of white youths in 1986, doubled in the five years between 1986 and 1991, while the white rate remained unchanged. In Philadelphia, Princeton political scientist John DiIulio reports, there were eighty-nine murders of people under age 20 in 1994. All but five of the victims were nonwhite.

Black criminals generally prey on their own. A Justice Department statistic that blacks are fifty times more likely to commit violent crime against whites than vice versa has led some to suggest that black criminals target whites, but the evidence does not bear this out. There are roughly eight times as many whites as blacks; and there are about six times as many violent criminals per capita among blacks as among whites. So, if criminals chose their victims at random, without regard to race, one would expect the black on white victimization rate per black person to be 48 times as large as the white on black rate per white person. Thus, it does not appear that black criminals take affirmative action to find white victims.

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Not surprisingly, black Americans increasingly view crime as their number one concern. DiIulio reports that the percentage of Americans who cited crime as a major national problem rose from about five to seven between 1985 and 1991. Yet the proportion of blacks living in central cities who identified crime as a major problem in their neighborhood rose from about one in ten to nearly one in four. Moreover, one in five black children in central city neighborhoods say they fear being attacked on their way to and from school; more than one-half of these children "worry a lot" or "worry somewhat" about being a crime victim. One study cited by DiIulio found that some 27 percent of black children, compared to 5 percent of white children, think it is "likely that they will be shot." Only a decade ago, one national magazine after another reported on the purported psychological damage done to American children by their fears of nuclear war. Whatever the merits of those claims, it seems clear that the fears experienced by urban minority youngsters—very real fears of being raped, bludgeoned or shot—must be far more debilitating.

Even more alarming, this situation will likely worsen considerably over the next decade as the male population aged 14 to 17 grows by about 25 percent overall and by 50 percent among blacks. Aggravating this demographic trend is the fact that, for at least a half-century, each successive generation of juvenile criminals has been more violent, and has committed more crimes, than its predecessor. Each twenty-year period since 1950 has witnessed an approximate tripling in the extent of violent lawbreaking among juveniles engaged in crime. There is no reason to expect this progression to attenuate, given the dismal condition of so many poor children in America's cities. Violent crime is, therefore, bound to increase in inner cities (and not only there) in the short run. Necessarily, a disproportionate number of the victims claimed by this rising tide of violence will be black.

Urban violence on such a scale, involving blacks as both perpetrators and victims, poses a profound dilemma for black leaders and intellectuals. On the one hand, black elites must represent the decent, law-abiding majority of African Americans who cower fearfully inside their homes while drug-peddling teenagers rule the inner-city streets. They must do so not only to enhance their group's reputation among whites, but as a precondition for black dignity and self-respect.

On the other hand, these elites must counter the demonization of young black men in which the majority culture is now feverishly engaged. Even as they condemn them for degrading their community, they cannot but view with sympathy the plight of the many poor, black youngsters who are not incorrigible but who have nevertheless committed crimes. They must wrestle with the complex causes—historical and contemporary, internal and external to the black experience—that account for this pathology, even as they insist that, despite them, each black youngster has the freedom to choose a moral way of life. This, too, is necessary for the black community's dignity and self-respect.

This dilemma is made all the more difficult by the reaction of whites to the threat posed by young blacks in the cities. White Americans are, to put it bluntly, frightened by and disgusted with the violent criminal behavior that, with reason, they associate with inner-city black youths. Their fear and disgust have bred contempt; and that contempt has in turn produced a truly remarkable degree of publicly expressed disrespect and disdain for blacks. It is no exaggeration to say that black, male youngsters in the central cities have been demonized in the popular mind as have no other group in recent American history. What was once whispered is now openly shouted. One conservative critic has declared, perhaps aptly, of white opinion: "the criminal and irresponsible black underclass represents a revival of barbarism in the midst of Western civilization." The objective basis for such harsh statements notwithstanding, there is more than a hint of racism in the relish with which some have taken up this newly liberated racial discourse. No reflective black American can fail to be alarmed by such rhetoric. What, for example, might the majority be expected to do, having discovered a malignant barbarism in its midst? Is it any wonder that rumors of genocidal plots against blacks circulate with credibility among residents of the poorest urban precincts?

The wise political scientist James Q. Wilson observed, in the aftermath of 1992's Los Angeles riots, that white fear of young black males has powerfully contributed to worsening race relations. Fear, he noted, often produces behavior indistinguishable from that produced by old-fashioned racism: it keeps whites out of black neighborhoods and makes them uneasy about blacks moving into theirs; it can induce one police officer to intimidate black suspects and lead another, seeking the release of tensions, to tell a racist joke. This is all plausible, but it is only part of the story. For, as Wilson would surely acknowledge, there is also a fair amount of white racism abroad in the land. (Yes, there is black racism, too!) A predisposition among some whites who, seeking a rationale for their invidious disdain for blacks, categorically deny them any benefit of the doubt can combine with the suspicions engendered in fair-minded whites by their well-founded fears to create an implacable racial antagonism.

It is surely fear, and an instinct for self-preservation, that explains the broad political support for efforts to increase the size of the incarcerated population. Over the last fifteen years, the public has rewarded politicians who promise to "lock them up and throw away the key" and has punished those who appear soft on crime. The politicians have learned their lesson. A shift of historic proportions has occurred in the administration of criminal justice since 1980, when the combined population of all state and federal prisons was some 500,000. By 1994, that number had tripled to over 1.5 million. This growth greatly exceeds the increase in violent crime during the same period. And the number of black men

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behind bars has probably risen almost four-fold.

On a given day in 1992, 372 whites and Hispanics were incarcerated for each 100,000 in the overall population, while the rate for blacks was 2,678 per 100,000. Blacks, 13 percent of the U.S. population, represented 45 percent of those arrested for violent felonies in 1992 and roughly one-half of those held in state and federal prisons. On a typical day in 1994 nearly one-third of black men aged 20-29 were either incarcerated, on parole or on bail awaiting trial. The racial disparity in prison populations has increased sharply in recent years, despite the fact (as nearly all experts agree) that blacks are not sentenced more severely than whites who have been convicted of the same crimes.

What then accounts for the more rapid growth in black imprisonment? While participation in violent crime has risen faster for blacks than whites, this accounts for no more than half the disparity. In *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime and Punishment in America*, University of Minnesota criminologist Michael Tonry argues that the "war on drugs" has been an important cause of the growing black presence in prisons over the last decade and a half. He notes that between 1980 and 1990 the proportion of drug offenders among those admitted to federal prisons in the U.S. rose from 22 to 40 percent, while over the same period the proportion of blacks among those arrested nationwide for drug offenses grew from 24 to 41 percent, and the percentage of blacks among persons admitted to state and federal prisons rose from 39 to 53 percent.

It is worth noting that this anti-drug policy did little to reduce drug use in the U.S., even as it locked up a growing number of blacks. As Tonry observes, narcotic use had been falling for at least five years before the anti-drug campaign began in the mid-1980s, and this trend was not accelerated by the "war on drugs." Moreover, a number of police officials and prosecutors have admitted that pressure for tangible results in the drug war led to more arrests in poor inner-city areas where, due in large part to the disorganization of these communities, drug sales frequently occur on the streets, and undercover operations are relatively easy to mount.

This is not to say that fighting the drug traffic in urban black communities was not in the interest of residents. It would be hard to imagine any single thing that would improve life more in poor black neighborhoods. The point is that, ironically, increased arrests of street-level drug dealers have not reduced the availability or raised the price of cocaine. Disrupted open-air drug markets easily move to new locations; and there appears to be no shortage of young inner-city blacks willing to replace the street-level dealers arrested in anti-drug sweeps. In the end, the anti-drug strategy has had a negligible impact on the supply of cocaine and heroin, but it has caused a major increase in the supply of black convicts. It is likely that, because they often commit violent crimes, many of these convicts deserve to be behind bars anyway. Still, it is hardly surprising that many blacks remain skeptical about the extent to which the "war on drugs" has benefited their communities.

There can be little doubt that blacks, even those living in the most dangerous communities, are deeply ambivalent about the trend toward increased incarceration of young black men. After all, those wreaking havoc in the urban ghettos are also the brothers, lovers, cousins and sons of law-abiding residents in these same districts. For most urban blacks, the desire for retribution is tempered by identification with the perpetrators. (There, but for the grace of God, go I, or my husband, or my son.) Thus, we now find urban jurors voting to "nullify" criminal charges against guilty black defendants and defending their action by saying they could not bear the thought of sending another young "brother" to prison. And we find liberal black politicians from the highest crime areas arguing against punitive criminal justice policies, even though their constituents could gain most from an improvement in public safety. These jurors are not fools; neither, I believe, are the politicians knaves. It is a safe assumption that these are deeply conflicted people, caught on the horns of an impossible dilemma.

After all, the muted response of inner-city residents (and of their representatives) to their own victimization constitutes just about the only check on the severity of contemporary criminal justice policy in America. Were the residents of America's ghettos to demand, through their political leaders, in the name of justice and civil rights, that they be protected from the predation of "these vicious criminals who just happen to be black," then their cries would powerfully complement the trend toward law and order that already dominates political debate. It would be arrogant to attribute, as do some on the right, their reticence to "false consciousness." More plausibly, this muted response in the face of victimization is a direct and powerful reflection of their ambivalence toward—and identification with—the perpetrators of these crimes. Viewed in this light, one can better appreciate the tragic moral dilemma in which these people are trapped.

I was reminded of this delicate, perplexing dilemma when talking recently with a young black lawyer of many years' acquaintance, who now labors as a prosecutor for the juvenile division of the district attorney's office in a large city. This young woman, let us call her "Elaine," did not want her identity publicly disclosed.

When first entering law school, Elaine never dreamed she would become a prosecutor. Like many of her peers, she presumed that the "black struggle" could be best pursued as a member of the defense bar. However, a summer in the public defender's office changed that. "I realized that *all* of our clients were guilty, some of the most heinous offenses." Shaken from her naïveté, she applied for an assistant D.A. position upon graduation, to serve her community by protecting the good people from the predations of the bad. After a brief apprenticeship, she assumed responsibility for a large number of juvenile felony cases that came into the D.A.'s office.

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Elaine describes her experience as "difficult and frustrating." She talks derisively of "those little gang bangers," every one black or Hispanic, who are both defendants and victims in the endless stream of shooting cases that come across her desk. "It seems that there aren't that many good guys out there; most of these kids involved in gang-related cases, both the victims and the defendants, are bad guys." Especially troubling to her is the extent to which the gangs use the criminal justice system as a mere extension of their street activities. A victim in a case one day becomes a defendant the next, walking right out of court to seek retaliation against the assailant's gang. Or a witness one day disappears the next as a sudden truce between the warring gangs leads him to "forget" what he first claimed to have seen.

Thus, while Elaine began thinking she would help protect the community from bad people, she has begun to wonder, especially when dealing with gang violence, whether this was an impossible vision. She has also begun to question how her office handles gang-related violence. Every allegation is pursued straightforwardly, even though it is ultimately unclear whether "justice" is being done. "They're just shooting each other, and we're sweeping up the mess," she says. "The more we sweep, the dustier it gets. Sometimes I wonder if we wouldn't do more good by just standing back and letting them have at it." But she immediately dismisses the thought.

The scale of the "mess" is staggering. "I just don't know how long I can go on, staring into the vacant eyes of these *children* who have, without apparent remorse, done the most awful things." In one case, a 14-year-old child used a baseball bat to bludgeon a parent to death. In another, youngsters aged 13 and 14 collaborated in a robbery-cum-murder, masquerading as petty drug dealers to lure their prey out of his automobile. In yet another, a 15-year-old boy explained his apparently senseless shooting spree that resulted in several serious injuries by saying, "I had a lot to prove." He was referring to his need to earn the respect of fellow gang members.

Elaine constantly laments that "these little gang bangers have no fear, either of jail or of death, it seems." Indeed, Elaine finds them almost indifferent to the prospect of incarceration, which they see as a rite of passage, another step in their burgeoning criminal careers. "They don't see any future for themselves; their future doesn't extend beyond tomorrow. They have no hope. They don't respect or value human life." She believes that many of the youngsters whom she encounters have been abused or neglected, though she cannot be certain since only a small fraction of her juvenile defendants' families have open cases pending with the state's child and family welfare department. In about a quarter of her cases, the defendant has an incarcerated parent at the time of the hearing. She says that, invariably, one or more of the following factors—welfare dependency, serious behavioral problems in school, parental drug addiction or a history of neglect and abuse—are present in the juvenile felony cases she sees.

Elaine has dealt with abuse cases as bad as any that have made national headlines. They seem to be taking their toll on her. In one, several crack-addicted welfare mothers lived collectively in an apartment with their children. Investigators found the children, left to their own devices for a number of days, malnourished and living in utter filth. One of these children later turned up, at age 13, as a murder defendant in a case of Elaine's. Later, after the boy was remanded to a therapeutic school to await trial, he attempted suicide. "It's like his life has already been totally destroyed, and he's still just a baby. Yet, if we let him walk around on the street, God only knows how many other lives he'd destroy. But I doubt that we can help him."

Like other judges and prosecutors working with juvenile criminal defendants, Elaine believes that youthful crime records should not be sealed after the child becomes an adult. She notes that this gives gangs the incentive to use juveniles as "shooters," since the penalties they face if caught are relatively light. Unlike many of her fellow prosecutors, though, Elaine is wary of the claims made by the police in certain cases: "There are a number of cases in which I go before the judge and request charges be dismissed because I'm convinced that the cop was lying. Some white cops just decide they're going to ride into the ghetto and lock up some little nigger tonight. When I think that's going on, I seek dismissal and take the files right to the shredder. Police officers have too much discretion; sometimes they abuse it."

But these occasions are not the norm. Elaine's views of the role of police in poor black communities are complicated. "Sure," she says, "the police patrol our community, sweeping these young men into jail. But those kids are doing terrible things. If something is wrong with our community, then we've got to fix it, and [if we did] we wouldn't have to be concerned about the attitudes of white cops."

"What manner of people are you, who live like this?" The question is unavoidable. It is true that black Americans are a scarred and diminished people who have survived, more or less intact, after a tremendous travail. But this is not the only truth. Blacks are a people of resourcefulness, ingenuity, creativity, courage, beauty and wonder. Foremost, blacks are a quintessentially *American* people. But the historical scar tissue so evidently manifest in the lives of these poor, black urban masses makes their circumstance special.

It does no good to say that these are a minority of black persons; that there are good and sufficient reasons for their troubling behaviors; that others, who are not black, have also fallen short. These are truths, of course; but voicing them changes nothing. Middle-class blacks must admit, and begin to overcome, their fear in the face of this carnage. We are afraid to go into these communities. We do not recognize these kids as us; the distance is great and difficult to bridge. We are also embarrassed by their behavior; we pick up the newspa-

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per with trepidation, bracing ourselves for news that the latest crime has been committed by a black person. This silence cannot continue. All blacks are connected—by bonds of history, family, conscience and common perception in the eyes of outsiders—to those in the urban slums. Black politicians, clergy, intellectuals, businessmen and ordinary folk must create hope in these desolate young lives; they must work to rebuild these communities; they must become their brother's keeper. Only then will change be possible. The nearly 1 million black men who marched on Washington just over two months ago seemed instinctively to understand this.

The Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood of Saint Paul Community Baptist Church in Brooklyn, renowned for his work in urban reconstruction, has forcefully addressed this issue. In his 1992 Walter Wriston Lecture, presented before the conservative Manhattan Institute of New York City, he said: "Why do we rebuild? We rebuild for our own dignity. We rebuild for our own self-respect in the eyes of our fellow men and women, and for respect in the eyes of our God and our children and grandchildren. *We build that we be no more a reproach.* There is hope in that." And dignity as well.

This quest for black dignity is illustrated by the work of the Ten Point Coalition of Boston, a group of black ministers devoted to the reconstruction of inner-city communities. One member, Reverend Bruce Wall, works by day in the juvenile courts and ministers by night at a local skating rink where young people gather. His philosophy is tough, Christian love. ("I'm being Daddy to these kids; you do something wrong, I'll kick your butt. I want to show the white community that African American men care about these kids.") He has called publicly for the revocation of probation for known gang members and for "Wanted" posters with the names and pictures of gang leaders to be posted in the community.

Another coalition member is Reverend Eugene Rivers, pastor of Azusa Christian Community. After gang rivalry led to a shooting inside a Boston church in 1992, Rivers said: "No one in the North End [an old Italian neighborhood of Boston] would challenge the notion that a criminal who desecrates a house of worship should be disciplined by the community." He went on to argue for armed patrols by black churchmen in some of the roughest areas, noting that the black community must "discipline its criminal underclass, or risk playing into the hands of right-wing whites who dismiss minorities as lawless."

A doctor by profession, Reverend Ray Hammond, pastor of the Bethel AME Church and a coalition member, has abandoned medicine to devote himself full-time to his ministry. In a speech delivered on Martin Luther King Day, 1995, he said: "Where do we go from here? The choice is ours. We can curse the darkness, or we can allow new light to shine through us. We can be the bearers of bad news or what Martin Luther King called 'the drum majors for justice.' We can be those paralyzed by fear or those who are energized by a faith in God and in one another." Reverend Hammond and his colleagues have chosen to struggle, against long odds but with indomitable faith, to create hope in the lives of their brethren.

It is, of course, terribly unfair to expect that blacks can or should repair this rent in the social fabric—such a profound malady, one so long in the making. Despite the nobility and morality of their efforts, Reverends Wall, Rivers and Hammond cannot possibly succeed on their own. They deserve help. Indeed, because they have taken responsibility for actively engaging the problem, they have earned the regard, and the cooperative involvement, of those outside the black community.

Dealing with the "root causes" of black crime may require remedies beyond the reach of individuals, families or ethnic collectives. The term "root causes" has become a pejorative in some quarters. It is said with a sneer, as if the only reason to think about the fundamental sources of criminal behavior is exculpatory—to relieve some perpetrator of responsibility for his act. If one wants to do more than simply "lock them up and throw away the key," it is essential to think about "root causes." If, on the other hand, one is looking to fix blame for the unlovely character of one's civilization on a pathologically deficient race, then thinking deeply about causation can only get in the way.

There are individual, communal and social responsibilities involved here. Persons must be held accountable for their wrongful acts. That they act under myriad influences beyond their control cannot be allowed to subvert their accountability. Families and communities are, to some considerable degree, responsible for the behavior of their children. The task of socializing a child is inescapably a familial and communal task, one which can be aided only in the crudest way by government action. But, in the end, there is no escaping the need for social action, mediated by government and politics, in which resources are mobilized in the public sphere to help meet the needs of the indigent. We can argue about how this is to be done and what should be the extent of such social provision, but a decent society cannot tolerate with indifference the deprivation of innocents.

I have not said here what I think "we" should do about the root causes of urban black crime. That discussion, necessarily speculative, is for another time. I mean only to observe that, absent the will to engage this problem, and with the seductive temptation to avoid it so readily at hand, there is a very good chance that nothing will be done, beyond the construction of ever more prison cells.

Recently, the hard-nosed criminologist John DiIulio, while observing that some "150,000 juvenile criminals may have to be incarcerated in the years just ahead," declared the following: "But some of these children are now still in diapers, and they can be saved. So let our guiding principle be 'Build churches, not jails'—or we will reap the whirlwind or our own moral bankruptcy." In black communities around the country, serious people have recognized the truth in this observation and have devoted their lives to the task ahead. What manner of people are "we," that they should be left to labor alone? •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Future of the Past

After Woodrow Wilson saw a private screening of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* at the White House, he reportedly said, "It is like writing history with lightning." Even back then, this was not the first comment on the relation between history and film; and, Clio knows, it was certainly not the last. Two recent books carry the discussion further.

Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies (Henry Holt, 304 pp., $30) has an introductory and a concluding dialogue, between which occur sixty articles, each about a historical film, each written by an established historian or biographer. This is a Society of American Historians Book, under the general editorship of Mark C. Carnes, with Ted Mico, John Miller-Monzon and David Rubel as editors of this volume. The roster of authors is impressive. Before we open the book, we can almost see a phalanx of outraged historians eager to pounce on a bunch of presumptuous, money-mad, cheapjack filmmakers. Well, they do pounce; but there is a lot more to the book.

The book begins with a dialogue between the historian Eric Foner and the filmmaker John Sayles, in which they discuss the problems and pitfalls of historical films. Foner handles Sayles with kid gloves as an exception from the common run, and Sayles graciously accepts the distinction; nonetheless, some interesting things get said. For instance, after the expected gibes at stupidities and errors in other directors' films, Sayles says, "Another thing that is very, very difficult to do in a movie ... is to remember that people's thought processes were different at different times.... When I'm making a historical film, I often spend the first twenty minutes trying as subtly as possible to get the audience into the heads of the people living at the time." There's some question as to whether he succeeded in doing this in *Matewan*, but the intent is intelligent.

The order of contents is chronological by the date of the subject. The first entry is on *Jurassic Park* by Stephen Jay Gould, the last is on *All the President's Men* by William E. Leuchtenberg. The book closes with a dialogue by Simon Schama between a film producer named Fiscal and Napoleon after the emperor has seen Gance's *Napoléon*. It reads like a parody of an anti-Hollywood parody—not the finest flower of Schama's insight and wit.

The book's format is relevant to its effect. It's a bit outsize, with pages laid out in magazine style—one kind of magazine, anyway. Margins are wide, leaving space for illustrations and sidebars and for a paragraph headed "Later...," about what happened afterward to people in the film just discussed. The second page of each entry is devoted to two photographs, one above the other, each with a paragraph of comment next to it. The upper picture is called *History*, the lower one *Hollywood*. Example: the second page of the article on *The Alamo* has a portrait of Davy Crockett at the top and a photo of John Wayne at the bottom, each accompanied by factual comment.

About the contents, I begin with a minor, slightly vindictive note, on the film accuracy of historians in this book on the historical accuracy of films. On that double-photo page for *Joan of Arc*, the bottom *Hollywood* picture is of Falconetti in Dreyer's film; for Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, the *Hollywood* picture is of Klaus Kinski; for Wajda's *Danton*, it is Gérard Depardieu. None of these films had anything to do with Hollywood; and some others, like Zinnemann's *A Man for All Seasons*, are only arguably Hollywood pictures.

The articles are almost always rewarding, not often unbearably supercilious about the errors noted in particular films, though they make one viewer a touch uneasy about his acceptances. Few of us could expect to know, for instance, that in Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* the Vietnamese speak Thai or that in *The Longest Day* one American officer on D-Day gives an order that was actually given by another. But we can feel a bit guiltier at not suspecting that, in Wajda's *Danton*, a scene in the studio of the painter David never happened; or that, in Huston's *Freud*, Freud did not treat, let alone meet, the "founding patient of psychoanalysis," Anna O.

Clearly, no film would have been selected for discussion in this book if it were error-free. (Possible exception: Sturges's *Sullivan's Travels*, but that is only circumstantially a historical film. If that's history, what isn't?) However, the pervasive tone of the book is fairly generous. Most of the contributors got at least some pleasure out of the films that they found factually shaky. A good many of

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The American President. *Rosy romance in a realistic setting—the White House. Michael Douglas is fairly secure as the president, Annette Bening delights as the lobbyist he falls for. A dream of liberal politics. (Reviewed 12/18/95)* **Carrington.** *The odd lifelong love of Dora Carrington (Emma Thompson) and Lytton Strachey (Jonathan Pryce). Splendid performances in a somewhat cool but delightfully intelligent screenplay. (12/4/95)* **Devil in a Blue Dress.** *A crime thriller with a mostly black cast. A modest dilution of Raymond Chandler, interesting for its views of L.A. black life twenty years before Watts. (10/30/95)* **Les Misérables.** *A twentieth-century analogue of Hugo, interwoven with scenes from the original. Jean-Paul Belmondo is robust in both stories. Messy but enjoyable. (11/20/95)*—**SK**

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them recognize that filmmaking involves compression, therefore simplification; complexities are left unexplored even when the outline of a life or event is accurate.

Are all these contributors barking up the wrong tree? That is the question raised, by implication, in **Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History** by Robert A. Rosenstone (Harvard University Press, 271 pp., $35). Rosenstone, a professor of history at the California Institute of Technology, is the author of two books that have been used for films: a book about the Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War, which was a source for a documentary called *The Good Fight*, and a biography of John Reed, which was a source for Warren Beatty's *Reds*. This experience has obviously heated Rosenstone's involvement in the history-film relation.

He develops two principal themes. First, our notion of what history *is* is constricted. We think of it as a set of marmoreal truths inscribed in books. In this century, which is passing from literacy to the postliterate, film is becoming an equivalent medium for history.

> To talk about the failures and triumphs, strengths and possibilities of history on film, it is necessary to pull the camera back from a two-shot [usually a view of two people] in which we see history on film and history on the page square off against each other, and to include in our new frame the larger realm of past and present in which both sorts of history are located and to which both refer.

This reminds me of Borges, who says somewhere about translations that they exist neither in the original language nor in the translator's but in a third language born of the two. Borges's idea doesn't excuse inaccuracy but may alter our view of it. Rosenstone, for his part, doesn't exculpate errors in films, but he tends to put them in the same light as errors in books. (Which of the contributors to *Past Imperfect* would contend that their books are absolutely error-free?)

Rosenstone doesn't say this, but he seems to be trying to move historical film into the company of historical drama. Some of the greatest of historical plays are flecked with historical error. Shakespeare's histories have long been hunting grounds for scholars. Schiller, Büchner, Kleist and Brecht are only a few of the dramatists who have written plays that are both great and factually faulty. Rosenstone apparently envisions historical film, at its best anyway, as entering that sphere.

His second theme, growing from the first, is even more venturous. For this postliterate generation, postmodern history has arrived. It "is alive and well. It exists not on the page but on the screen." Does this mean that postmodern history will be served up by profit-driven filmmakers? "Yes" is presumably Rosenstone's answer, but he presumably would also answer that what we consider sacrosanct historical truth has been variously swerved by historians' differing interests. Besides, the arrival of this postmodern history doesn't mean the end of other kinds of history any more than the arrival of postmodern art meant the elimination of all other artistic modes.

Both of Rosenstone's themes sound to me a mite intellectually opportunistic. Yet somewhere inside them there's a grain of possibility. Would we want schoolchildren to learn about the matters treated in *JFK* from that film? Heaven (or Clio) forbid. But, in somewhat lofty analogy, would we want those children to learn about the way that painting has treated the nude female from Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror*? When the viewer is ready to go beyond verity to examination of that verity—from one sort of verity to another—Picasso helps. So, in their measure, do the best makers of historical film. *JFK* is a farrago of factual inventions and distortions; but it dramatizes powerfully the spiritual unease that has haunted this country since the assassination.

I doubt that many readers will subscribe fully to Rosenstone's theses. I doubt that many will forget them. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Character and Personality in Shakespeare

A few weeks ago, the celebrated scholar-critic Harold Bloom gave two Tanner lectures at Princeton, with the titles "Shakespeare and the Value of Personality" and "Shakespeare and the Value of Love." Along with three other scholars (Stephen Greenblatt, Stanley Cavell and Lisa Jardine), I was invited to participate as a discussant. The lectures were pretexts for Bloom to ruminate on his favorite Shakespeare characters, notably Falstaff, Hamlet and Lear, and to pigstick his favorite *bête noire*, namely ideological criticism. Like all of his brilliantly conceived and gracefully composed literary reflections, the talks were constructions of such original insight studded with so many provocative barbs that they were bound to raise some hackles among the other respondents. As for me, I was uncertain whether to devote my allotted fifteen minutes to praising Caesar or burying him.

As suggested in his book *The Western Canon*, Bloom rightly holds Shakespeare to be the canonical center not just of Western literature but of world culture. And one must respect him for continuing to defend the centrality and integrity of Shakespeare against the radical feminists, cross-dressers, historicists, multiculturalists and all those other earnest myrmidons of political correctness whom he memorably calls "The School of Resentment." In "Shakespeare and the Value of Personality," the paper on which I was asked to comment, this self-proclaimed "Bloomian Brontosaurus" holds the old-fashioned position that Shakespeare valued personality above any other element in his drama. "Personality and eros," he says, "were for the poet-playwright Shakespeare primarily aesthetic values." With this bold statement, Bloom joins the rearguard ranks of such eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics as Maurice Morgann (*The Fortunes of Falstaff*) and A.C. Bradley (*Shakespearean Tragedy*) who held that character was the supreme dramatic element in Shakespearean drama.

I see two paradoxes here. Although Bloom is properly critical of Plato for dismissing Homer (along with all other Greek poets) from his Republic, it was Plato who believed that *ethos*, or character (in its morally elevated sense), was the only proper concern of art. And although Bloom is clearly an Aristotelian in his essentially aesthetic approach to literature, his preference for what he calls "personality" challenges those early-twentieth-century revisionist critics who believed with Aristotle that the soul of tragedy was not *ethos* but rather *mythos* (variously translated as action, plot and myth).

It is also paradoxical that while Bloom celebrates the primacy of character in Shakespeare's art, he expresses the academic's age-old conviction that Shakespeare should be read aloud rather than performed. "I am so weary of badly directed Shakespeare," he moans in typical Bloomian despair, "that I would prefer to attend public readings rather than performances of the plays,

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if only such readings were available." I find this paradoxical since who but actors share Bloom's passionate belief in personality as the crucial element of drama? Who but actors share his interest in analyzing, probing, interpreting and dissecting Shakespeare's characters, though admittedly for the anti-Bloomian purpose of impersonating them on stage?

I suspect that Bloom's fatigue with bad Shakespearean production is motivated not just by his quarrel with modern conceptual directors but by a secret conviction that he could perform the plays better himself, and he may be right. Harold Bloom is not only a leading academic critic; he may also be one of the great American actors *manqué*. I can never watch him at a lectern for more than three minutes without imagining him on stage. His melancholy air, his mournful heavy-lidded eyes, his exquisite gloom, coupled with a certain rabbinical paternalism, make him ideal casting for all those parts that Charles Laughton and Zero Mostel are no longer around to play: Falstaff, Henry VIII, Simon Eyre in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses in Nighttown*, Max Bialystock in *The Producers*. Though possessed of a rather colorless voice, he has the colorful temperament that we associate with actors of size and appetite.

It is therefore altogether fitting that the histrionic personality named Harold Bloom should be preoccupied with the histrionic personalities of William Shakespeare. And his lectures are notable for defending their variety and depth. Bloom, for example, believes that William Empson is "morally reductive" in assigning a "villainous" side to Falstaff, and he is right. But it was E.M.W. Tillyard, if I remember correctly, who first conjectured that Shakespeare originally conceived Falstaff as a villain—a Vice figure in a medieval morality play about the moral education of a True Prince. In this design, Hal is like Everyman, torn between the sinful permissiveness of Falstaff and the tough love of virtuous father figures like the Lord Chief Justice, who would eventually reach a stage of moral awareness that would make him reject his evil companions and choose the path of "virtue"—though it is difficult to understand an idea of "virtue" defined by repudiating his best friend Falstaff, hanging Bardolph, killing helpless prisoners and slaughtering the French on the fields of Agincourt.

But since Shakespeare was a poet before he was a Tudor apologist or an English nationalist, the play got away from him and the character of Falstaff escaped—much the same way that Mother Courage, that "hyena of the battlefield," escaped the poet-ideologist Brecht and took on a vital life of her own. Put another way, Shakespeare began the play as a Platonist, preoccupied with moral aspects of character (*ethos*), then developed, against his will, into an Aristotelian, allowing Falstaff's character—a character revealed through action (*mythos*)—to exceed its restricting moral outline. This has always struck me as the truest reading of *The Henriad* and the most convincing explanation of Falstaff's complicated nature.

Falstaff, Hamlet and Lear form a pantheon of Bloom's favorite personalities, perhaps because they represent the triple poles of his own personality. But to treat Hamlet as a personality is to ignore the fact that his play also embodies a conflict between *ethos* and *mythos*. Hamlet is not only a courtier, soldier and scholar but also an amateur playwright, who turns *The Murder of Gonzago* into *The Mousetrap* with the addition of some dozen or sixteen lines. I disagree with Bloom about what those lines are. Rather than the Player King's speech beginning "Purpose is but the slave to memory" (Bloom's vote), I think it more likely that Hamlet composed the Player Queen's protestations about second marriages ("A second time I kill my husband dead/When second husband kisses me in bed"), especially since Hamlet says pretty much the same thing to his mother in the closet scene, albeit in much better verse.

Bloom recognizes that Hamlet is self-consciously theatrical—in short, another actor—and of course he speaks some of Shakespeare's greatest verse. But as Hamlet himself recognizes ("I am ill at these numbers"), he is an inferior poet and a worse playwright—and not just because of his weakness for doggerel. His artistic horizons are limited. Nietzsche called Euripides the poet of aesthetic Socratism. He might have leveled the same charge against Hamlet. If Hamlet's *Poetics* are encapsulated in his phrase "the play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king," then he obviously shares with Euripides, Socrates and Plato the belief that the main purpose of art is to expose the guilty, to chasten character and to improve the state.

But whatever Hamlet believes, the playwright who conceived him was an artist who knew, if only subliminally, that poetry has ends considerably more important than rewarding virtue and punishing vice, more important than arousing the remorse of "guilty creatures sitting at a play," even more important than trying to solve the inequities of society. Today, when our intellectual wells are being fluoridated by Platonists who measure the value of art by its political, social and moral utility, Shakespeare stands as one of our last defenses against such mindless utilitarianism. And so does Harold Bloom, who skewers those reductive thinkers and "scholarly detractors who love Sir John rather less than they love moral virtue and its alliance with the nation-state."

Something puzzles me though, and that is why Bloom talks about the value of *personality* in Shakespeare rather than about the value of *character*. My objection may sound pedantic. After all, the dictionary defines "personality" as "the state or quality of being a person," which suggests that the term may be interchangeable, if not synonymous, with "character." However, the word "personality" has now come to carry an additional layer of meaning, namely "a person of prominence or notoriety"—i.e. a talk-show celebrity of the kind featured in *People* magazine. In short, personality is a quality measured by external attributes—its etymological roots are found in the Latin "*persona*" or mask—while "character" suggests a certain quiet internal integrity. Or, to revive David Reisman's familiar terms, personalities are other-directed while characters are inner-directed.

The distinction between character and personality, in fact, is a major theme of modern drama. It obsessed the playwright Luigi Pirandello, who wrote innumerable plays about the tension between what you are and what society expects you to be (or thinks you are). For Pirandello, personality was the rigid mask we place over our features in order to placate the busybody's hunger to define and classify, while character for him was the suffering face, spontaneous, evanescent, unknowable. And that is why actors are often our most celebrated personalities. Being role players, constantly shifting skins, playing a multitude of characters, they represent the masks used in the drama or *dramatis personae*. In Pirandello's *Trovarsi*, an actress before a mirror learns that she has no self or character, only a compound of her past roles, while the suffering hero of *Enrico Quattro* can preserve his character only by assuming the personality (i.e. playing the part) of a medieval king. Likewise, Ibsen's fantasist Peer Gynt is loaded with personality, but his Gyntian self is like an onion, layered with the parts of all the characters he has previously played (story teller, lover, merchant, emperor, etc.). A superficial personality like Peer is best described with a phrase I once heard used about another shallow individual: "What a character that guy needs." All this is my long-winded way of saying that the qualities Bloom admires in Hamlet, Falstaff and

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Lear are more accurately described as qualities of character.

And Shakespeare himself was very conscious of this distinction. When Hamlet says "I know not seems," he is disdaining a role-playing personality and claiming to have a sincere character, just as when Iago says "I am not what I am," he is doing the very opposite. Iago is an actor who plays at *seeming*, at dissembling, at dissimulation, at being other than what he is, which explains his obsession with reputation (so similar to the actor's preoccupation with reviews or the politician's with his image). We believe him when he tells Othello, "Good name in man and woman, dear my Lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls," and we don't believe him when to Cassio he says the opposite, that "Reputation is an idle and most false imposition." In common with his fellow Machiavels in Shakespeare, notably Edmund in *Lear*, Iago builds an illusion of reputation, outward show, good name—the construct of personality—in order to compensate for, and disguise, his lack of character. Stage manager and director of Othello's tragedy, he is also the main supporting actor, hiding his evil face beneath an invented mask of directness and affability.

Though equally concerned about his "wounded name," and also endowed with an actor's self-consciousness, Hamlet nevertheless strikes us as more a character than a personality. Like Iago and Edmund, he dissimulates, assuming the mask of an antic disposition, but by compulsion, not by choice. (He also becomes a mass murderer by compulsion—a bloodbath Stephen Dedalus comments on in *Ulysses*, "Nine lives are taken off for his father's one.") But to *seem* is as foreign to Hamlet's character as it is native to Iago's personality. Seeming is the way of villains, flatterers and actors. Hamlet's true nature is more like that of all those blunt plain-spoken soldiers—Kent in *Lear*, Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*—who speak their minds regardless of the consequences.

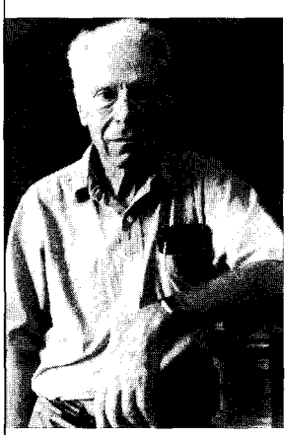
It is worth remarking that such soldiers were the icons of the age, men who purged their blood in battle rather than, like idle courtiers, allowing it to swell their veins where it could only be discharged through sexual activity (according to contemporary physiological theory, sperm was thought to be dried blood). Indeed, these gruff soldiers had evolved into such conventional figures of virtue, in the satires and plays of spitting critics like Jonson, Marston, Nashe, et al., that when Iago chooses a disguise for himself, he enacts the role of the military plaindealer. But Hamlet is a natural plaindealer. His directness is not a performance, not an act, not a pretense in a borrowed costume. Hamlet has "that within which passeth show, these but the trappings and the suits of woe."

Trappings and suits are crucial garments in *King Lear* as well, and for much the same reasons. "Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume," the battered old king says to Edgar on the heath. Furs, woolens, perfumes and face paints are the costumes and makeup of courtly histrionic personalities. But it is total nakedness, and nakedness alone, that best displays the reality of character. The way Shakespeare plays on the word "accommodations" in *Lear* underlines his belief that only unaccommodated man, that poor bare forked animal, is capable of virtue. The word "accommodated," as Justice Shallow pedantically reminds us in *Henry IV, Part II*, stems from the Latin *accommodo*, which means to borrow or to lend. And Lear must divest himself of all the lendings of royal personality—his troupe of retainers, his kingship, his clothes, his illusions of power, even his five wits—before he can truly gain his own character. In that great speech, "Come, let's away to prison," Lear has discovered that one finds true happiness only by shunning the great stage of fools—the stage of actors performing their futile roles. He has learned to disdain the vanity of speculation about courtly celebrity, "who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out," the red hot center of histrionic personalities and *Entertainment Weekly* fame. When forced, if only for a moment, to divest himself of his last lending, the illusion of salvation through Cordelia, and look into the naked abyss of life without hope, it kills him.

I would beg Harold Bloom not to take Lear's way and shun the stage, however foolish it may seem. For all the growing theaterophobia that he and other academics are now displaying, the best place to observe the distinction between character and personality enacted is not in the study but in the theater itself. All of us have suffered from bad productions of Shakespeare, and the theater continues to be the most provisional of the arts. Still, it is only through the assumed *personalities* of actors—through their fleshly embodying of great roles—that the major *characters* of Shakespeare, the doubleness, complexity and variety Bloom correctly finds in Falstaff, Hamlet and Lear, can be fully manifested. •

A Propensity to Self-Subversion

ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN



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Lucky Jim

BY FOUAD AJAMI

The Politics of Diplomacy by James A. Baker, III with Thomas M. DeFrank

(G.P. Putnam's Sons, 687 pp., $32.50)

Consider the odd last scene of Jim Baker's custodianship of American foreign policy. It is August 13, 1992, and the statesman is to be dispatched to his old, dreaded vocation as a political handler. This was the last insult handed Baker by George Bush: the "little brother" raised to an exalted and honored station dispatched to do the work of hired help. A cover had been found—Baker was to become White House chief of staff instead of campaign manager; but it was a distinction without a difference. In the Dean Acheson Auditorium, the people at State, the FSOs and the career civil servants whom Baker had never cared for and never cut into the game are assembled for a farewell scene. And the man who had come into the State Department determined not to be captured by "the building," who had run the show with a tight cabal of loyalists, loses his composure. He has trouble getting to the end of his announcement: "There were tears in my eyes as I rode the elevator back up to my seventh-floor office as a now lame-duck Secretary of State—tears of pride mingled with enormous reluctance to relinquish the most personally satisfying of all my government assignments."

In his memoir, the man at State emerges out of a void and steps into a void. What came before and after the years of diplomacy is, for the most part, edited out of the narrative. The memoir as redemption: James Baker III as he wants to be remembered, in the interlude between the Willie Horton campaign of 1988 and the failed campaign of 1992. Be gone the blemishes. There are two references to Thucydides and none to Dan Quayle. A single reference to the memory of the late Lee Atwater is balanced by a reference to Dante. Baker studied Classics at Princeton; he wrote his junior paper on Russian history, on the Kerensky government, to be precise. He wants us to know this; he is eager to show that there is more to him than political skills.

Great events happened on his watch. He was there at the dissolution of the post-World War II order of states. It was the Houston deal-maker's luck to have been present at a truly revolutionary moment—the vindication of democratic capitalism. He was there as the lies of communism were exposed. Fortune smiled on him. A predator from Baghdad stepped forth and ignited a crisis in the Persian Gulf that transformed the Middle Eastern landscape. It was fun to play the game, since he, Baker, had all the chips. A whole history came his way; and he would turn its material into manageable briefs and reasonable bargains.

The world that Baker was called upon to interpret and to reshape was a vast un-American place. Where there were backs to be slapped and deals to be cut, Baker was in his element. But in that vast un-American place there were matters and men that the son of the Houston patrician class had not been brought up to understand. Jim Baker never ran into the likes of Hafez al-Assad and Slobodan Milosevic on the tennis courts of the River Oaks Country Club (Baker's "second home" as a young boy in Houston) or in the board rooms of Baker & Botts, the prestigious family law firm.

There came to him early on in his life, he says, some personal knowledge of what communism was about. At the River Oaks Country Club, the tennis pro, one Andrew Jitkoff, was a Russian immigrant whose family had been "run out by the Bolshevik revolution." This was what a sheltered background permitted. I do not mean to recommend misfortune as a requirement for dealing with the world, but this kind of comfort can be blinding. The limitations of Baker's upbringing are easy to see. With the privilege came provincialism and a large measure of smugness. No swagger could make up for these defects. In the world beyond his class and his peers—and his country—the ice man of the Bush years was out of his depth.

The thing is given away in an anecdote about Baker's dealing with Hafez al-Assad. Baker had become hooked on the Middle Eastern bazaar (more on this later): he had come to Damascus often, and, like other American diplomats before him, Baker had come to think that he had divined the method and the guile of the Syrian ruler. That curiosity about Assad, he felt, was mutual. "On a personal level, I learned later that Assad had told an aide that he was intrigued by what he described as my 'Texan-Princetonian mix.' "

Anyone who knows anything about Hafez Assad, a child of the Alawite mountains who has rarely ventured beyond his capital, knows that Assad has no idea where on earth Princeton is and what on earth a Princetonian is like. The "Texas Princetonian" is Baker's view of himself: he either projected it onto Assad or fell for a sycophant's stroking of his ego. Baker could never fathom the world of the Syrian ruler—or that of the Takriti gang in Baghdad, or that of a multitude of other predators and despots.

He had been good at tracking and hunting delegates for Gerald Ford and George Bush; he had managed things well for the genial Ronald Reagan, he had gotten on well with Nancy Reagan; he had been good at the care and feeding of the Washington press corps. His success, his self-confidence and a relationship of mutual need with George Bush had brought him to the ultimate appointive office in the land. But that trail had not turned up the likes of Hafez Assad. And no "tick" or "bullet" by State Department Counselor Robert Zoellick or briefing by Dennis Ross—Baker's man on the vast expanses of the Middle East and the Commonwealth of Independent States, who specialized in "themes" and "concepts"—could make up for those limitations of vision and of experience.

Thus it happened that in the hour of the greatest opportunity for the foreign policy of the United States since the end of the Second World War the steward of that policy was only a tinkerer and a deal-maker. Where serendipity saw him through, Baker appeared in command. A hyper-realist, he perfected the art of the spin. He had a knack for leaving the scene of failure just in the nick of time, and for showing up when the tide was beginning to turn. It is a tribute to the man's political competence, to his ability to cut losses, that he is better known for the skill with which he put together the coalition at the United Nations that authorized the use of force against Iraq than he is for the appeasement of Saddam that led up to the war. In a parliamentary system of government, the principal Cabinet officer might have fallen in a crisis of that magnitude. In this case Baker walked away from the wreckage; and a hapless

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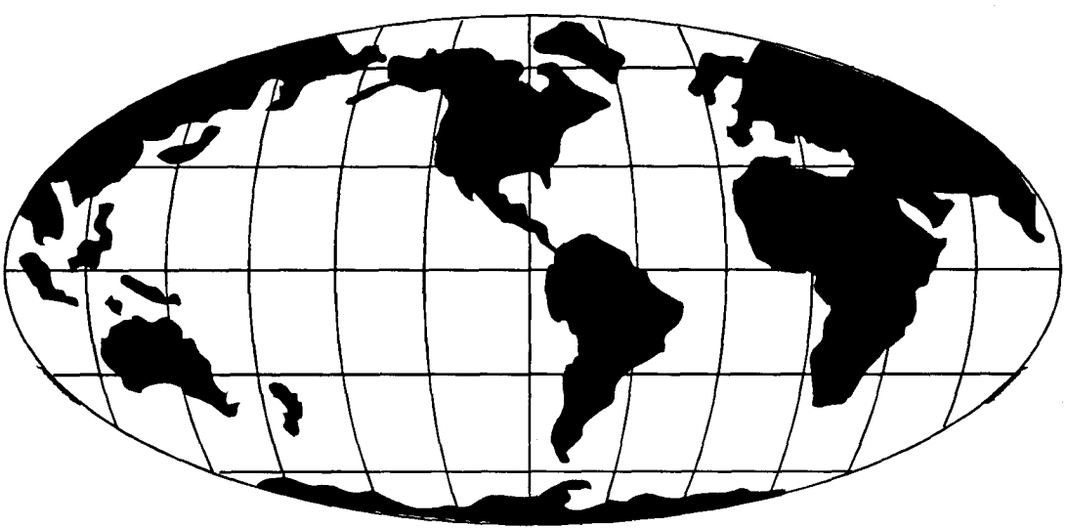

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ambassador to Baghdad, April Glaspie, was set up as the culprit who conveyed to the Iraqi dictator a message of American weakness and American ambivalence.

Baker found a new role in the crisis: he circled the globe—eighteen days, twelve countries, three continents—to put together the vote at the United Nations with which Bush shamed a reluctant Congress into supporting the war in the Gulf. It was vintage Baker. In his pocket he carried a list of diplomatic "sweeteners." He met, he says, "with all my Security Council counterparts in an intricate process of cajoling, extracting, threatening, and occasionally buying votes." The Chinese wanted a presidential visit to Beijing; a visit was held out to them, and they stepped out of the way and abstained in the Security Council. Zaire had a Security Council seat that year; its rulers were told that a congressional decision to cut off aid to Zaire had been "deeply disappointing" to the president and that the administration would "try to maintain U.S. assistance." He flew all night, from the Azores to Bogota, to secure Colombia's vote. He bagged Malaysia's vote after meeting with its foreign minister at the Los Angeles airport. He did all this, and still he hedged his bets. He had let the word out in the press that he had serious reservations about the use of force, that he wanted to give the economic sanctions against Iraq more time to do their work. He coordinated his efforts with Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who also opposed the resort to arms and also had a remarkable talent for covering his tracks and spinning a story.

Baker was lucky to turn up at State when he did. After the calamities of the Iran-Contra affair, after the astrologers and the fantasies that would have had us trade our security policy for shields in space, after North and Poindexter and Secord and Hakim, we were ready for a repose. We did not mind that our Secretary of State had no interest, deep down, in the foreign world, and precious little knowledge of it. We were ready to conduct our affairs without Reagan's millennial visions—without the "vision thing." We cut slack for Jim Baker and Brent Scowcroft and the realism of the Bush crowd. Our standards had been altered—and lowered. If the men in charge of our foreign policy did not attempt suicide over bungled deals in Iran, if they managed to escape criminal indictment, we were ready to declare them strategic wizards.

In relief we welcomed the realists and the deal-makers—in Baker we had our problem solved, Trump without the hype at the helm of our diplomacy. The swagger we did not mind: we would not begrudge the man his vanities and his opportunism. It was not Assad who had been intrigued by that Tex-Ivy mix; it was the rest of us, pundits and public alike. Baker could not lose. The charges hurled at him could not stick: it was said by a minority of critics that he lacked the "historical imagination" for a moment as plastic, as fluid, as the end of the cold war, that he lacked the poetry and the philosophy to connect with the great changes in the world, with the ascendancy of liberalism. It was noted that he had no scruples about dealing with dictatorships, that he coddled Deng and courted Assad and appeased Saddam. It should have been easy to tell that the man had a tin ear for the meaning of the tumult out there in the former lands of communism. But on the whole he led a charmed life.

Not a master of any real subject, Baker's skill, it was said, lay in management. That there was something defective at the core in a foreign policy that excused its abdication in the former lands of Yugoslavia by pleading its obsession with the Middle East peace process—we could have Dennis Ross do the Palestinians or we could have Dennis Ross do the Bosnians—was not readily apparent at the time. The ground was beginning to burn in Yugoslavia in the summer of 1991, but nothing could be done: Baker and the cabal were in "the Palestinian souk"—his words. "Milosevic had Saddam's appetite," Baker writes, "but Serbia didn't have Iraq's capabilities.... Moreover, in the summer of 1991, we were already consumed by the Middle East peace process and close to getting the parties to the table."

JAMES A. BAKER III BY TAYLOR JONES FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Bush, and Baker, and the Baker entourage had a passion for the Middle East. It was a passion that they did not have for Vukovar and Dubrovnik and Sarajevo. No time could be spared to stare down Milosevic and to thwart his bloodthirsty project of Greater Serbia; the boss and his Ross were busy with Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi. Baker circled the Middle East time after time; but he spared Yugoslavia only a single day. On June 21, 1991, they were in Belgrade. He writes of his "day in Belgrade" with precision; he knows the day; for him there would be no other day. He was there for ten hours of talks. The presidents of the Yugoslav republics—Slobodan Milosevic, Franjo Tudjman, Alija Izetbegovic, the others—were summoned to the Federation Palace, as was Ante Markovic, the Prime Minister of the shell of Yugoslavia. Baker tells us that he took the measure of these men—Milosevic, he discovered, was "at heart a tough and a liar"—and saw them sleepwalking toward wreckage. To these leaders, Baker

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expressed his preference, and that of his president, for the status quo. A terrible nationalist storm had broken out, the killing had begun, but Baker read to these Balkan leaders the sermon that he had peddled in the republics of the Soviet Union: support for central authority, a warning against the breakup of the union.

The call for unity in Yugoslavia was misplaced: in the lands of Yugoslavia that was precisely Milosevic's call and his alibi. A policy wedded to the "territorial integrity" of Yugoslavia was a Balkan version of "constructive engagement" in Baghdad. Milosevic, in power since 1987, had put his dream of Greater Serbia in play. The dress rehearsal began in Kosovo, with a merciless campaign against the Albanians. The demons of Serbian nationalism and paranoia had been unleashed. Throughout 1990-1991, however, no alarm bells went off in Washington. A line was drawn by the Bush people: Serbia would not be punished or ostracized, we would keep the other Yugoslav republics at arm's length, we would maintain our reserve toward calls for independence. Though Baker assures us that he had told the Balkan leaders that America would choose democracy over unity in Yugoslavia, we had placed our bets on the weakest of reeds: the territorial integrity of a state that had expired.

The Balkan toughs must have taken the measure of their guest that day in June '91: he was in a hurry, he had little time to spare, they would not see him again. A great triumph had been enjoyed by America in the Gulf, but the gamblers in the Balkans decided that they could defy American wishes. Baker warned against secession—and Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence four days after his visit. He warned against the use of force, and the Balkans descended promptly into a long night of terror. The "New World Order" of George Bush and Jim Baker was born in the Gulf and it died in the Balkans.

The initiative in Yugoslavia shifted to Germany; the Germans pushed for, and secured, European recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. The Bush people made their choice: they were troubled more by calls for independence than by Milosevic's project of Greater Serbia. As the Serbs laid siege to Vukovar, Baker received a "convincing" note from Dennis Ross: "U.S. interests will not be served," Ross wrote, "by ... ad hoc declarations and ... rejections. They will best be served if we can help develop the philosophical and practical framework within which this and future independence moves in the East, and around the world are decided." We have a saying in Arabic: I speak to my daughter-in-law so my neighbor can hear me. The administration was addressing Yugoslavia, but its message was directed at Russia and the republics of the Soviet Union. The "territorial integrity" that we defended in Yugoslavia was our policy toward that large "prison of nations," Russia and the republics of the Soviet Union. We were never really concerned with Yugoslavia; it was the precedent for the Soviet Union about which we worried.

The Secretary of State, with his keen sense for deals that work and deals that don't, was happy to stay clear of this tangle. He would leave it to Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger; they were Balkan hands, he said, and he was not. He would declare it a European problem. And he needn't have been concerned about the other "principals" in the bureaucratic hierarchy: Cheney and Powell and Scowcroft were similarly content to write off the Balkans. Baker writes, without any sense of irony, that "Bosnia had more characteristics of Vietnam than Iraq." (You would think that the Bush people would scurry for cover when Bosnia is discussed, but Eagleburger and Scowcroft are on all the talk shows peddling their wisdom on the former Yugoslavia, second-guessing the Clinton administration.) We had kicked the "Vietnam syndrome" in the Arabian

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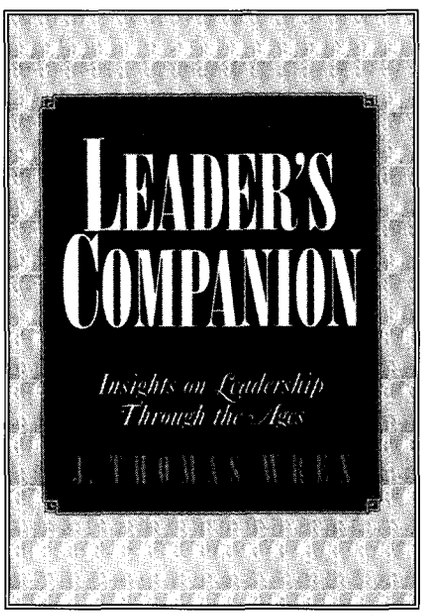

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desert, but we would revive it in the Balkans.

It would have taken a deeper sense of nationalism's furies than Baker possessed to attend to Yugoslavia's troubles; it would have taken knowledge of the buried histories of Europe's tribalism awakening after Communist rule. But an administration that had been trying to talk the Ukraine out of independence could not read the wind in Yugoslavia. More importantly, the task called for attention to detail, for patience. But the secretary and his inner circle were fixated on a matter that engaged them and their president in a direct way: a test of wills with the prime minister of Israel, a determination to bring Yitzhak Shamir to account. They spent their time acquiring an intimate knowledge of every prefab and every settlement that was put up or "thickened" in the West Bank. This was the *idée fixe* of Bush and Baker in 1991-92.

There developed in the Bush administration a conviction that history was going their way everywhere, and there remained only the Israeli-Arab conflict and the disposition of the West Bank. This ideology of the Middle East as the "last place" was expressed by Bush himself: "We have seen the evolution of the Soviet Union, we have seen the defeat of aggression over there in Iraq, we've seen democracy on the move in our hemisphere. And there is a last place that needs this process to go forward." The Kurds had been stranded in the hills; the Shia of Iraq had been subjected to a brutal campaign of extermination; a thousand mutinies were being hatched against Gorbachev in Moscow; Milosevic and Tudjman had cut a deal for the partition of Bosnia—but all that remained for the triumphant Pax Americana was peace in the casbah of Nablus.

We rejected Saddam's "linkage" between the Gulf and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but we adopted linkage in the aftermath of the war. The "peace processors" were anxious to resume their work. The authority secured in the Arabian Peninsula would be redeemed by the river Jordan. Baker gives the rationale supplied him by Dennis Ross for this hyper-activism: "We've just seen an earthquake. We have to move before the earth resettles, because it will and it never takes long." It was time to close the deal: American leverage, Baker concluded, would "never be so great again."

In truth, Bush and Baker needed no awakening to this cause. They had been itching for a showdown with Israel all along. At their request, it will be recalled, the Reagan administration in its final days had launched a "dialogue" with the Palestine Liberation Organization. The ground had been cleared for the new team to try its hand at "comprehensive peace," at strongarming Israel. Matters had not worked: Arafat had "renounced" terror, but a terrorist incursion on the beaches of Tel Aviv by one of Arafat's men in May 1990 sealed the fate of the dialogue. And so, in the aftermath of the Gulf war, the Bush people would try again.

Their showcase would be the Madrid summit of October 1991. Baker planned and pushed for the summit with singular zeal. He bullied and cajoled; he went from one Middle Eastern capital to another, telling his interlocutors that he had a "dead cat" in his luggage and that he would leave it at their doorstep if they didn't cooperate. He was relentless; and his relentlessness was based on the assumption that the Arabs would "produce Assad" and "fence out" the PLO. The Jordanians and the Palestinians would be forgiven the ride they took with Saddam, and Shamir would be threatened with the "dead cat" at his doorstep. There would remain, at the end, the matter of Palestinian representation. A joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation provided a transparent cover for all concerned.

The deal was closed with the Palestinians in yet another meeting, in the summer of 1991, with Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi: "Husseini and Ashrawi told me they feared being assassinated by right-wing Israeli fanatics. 'You're talking to a dead man,' Husseini said. 'I'm sure extremist Israelis will kill me. Maybe in a week or a month, but they will get me. Don't let me die without something in my pocket.'" Baker fell for this piece of melodrama. The U.S. Secret Service provided training for a contingent of Palestinian bodyguards. But nothing was to happen to Husseini and Ashrawi. (The latter became a media icon.) Israel looked the other way as the Palestinian delegates openly coordinated their every move with the PLO.

The glitz of Madrid, one giant photo-op, a global media show, was made in Baker's image. It was his creation, testimony to his ability to persuade and to hustle. He had endured marathon sessions with Assad (six hours, two glasses of lemonade, on one occasion), he had cornered Shamir, he had rehabilitated the Palestinians. It was auspicious for Arabs and Jews to meet, the innocent said about Madrid, on the eve of the quincentennial of the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors from Spain. A painting of Charles V slaughtering the Moors, Baker tells us, was "hurriedly warehoused" and removed from Madrid's Royal Palace, the conference center. The Madrid conference was Baker's major accomplishment and his lasting contribution, and he may be forgiven a rhetorical flourish: "Like the walls of Jericho, the psychological barriers of half a century came tumbling down with resounding finality that clear fall morning."

Baker would stay with Israeli-Palestinian matters to the end. Shamir had defied the Bush administration, and he had to pay for it. The drawn-out battle over $10 billion of U.S. loan guarantees to Israel provided the occasion—and the leverage—to settle the score with Shamir. The irony has been noted by Robert W. Tucker in the pages of this magazine: the administration that sought to unseat three governments in 1992—in Libya, in Iraq, in Israel—succeeded only in Israel. The role that the battle over the loan guarantees played in the fall of Likud is a matter of controversy. A fight had anyway erupted in Israel, a clash of visions and priorities between the absorption of the immigrants from the Soviet republics and the settlements in the West Bank. A promise of normalcy was held out for the besieged country by Yitzhak Rabin. The new Russian immigration had broken with Likud. Israel had chosen Rabin's way—economic growth behind the Green Line instead of settlements beyond it, the promise, as Rabin put it, of "getting Gaza out of Tel Aviv." "In hindsight," Baker writes, "it's obvious that the controversy over loan guarantees clearly contributed to Likud's defeat. At the time, however, we didn't really appreciate the significance it would have in the Israeli election." Nice try. These words are a tease. Baker and his president were glad to see Shamir go, glad to let it be known that he had paid a price for violating their writ.

"I've always known that I was more a man of action than of reflection," Baker observes. "I certainly know that I'm not naturally disposed to the daunting task of writing history." So, at the beginning of this memoir, we have been warned. Judged by the standards of earlier foreign policy memoirs, *The Politics of Diplomacy* is a disappointing book. It lacks, as we knew it would, the literacy of Acheson's memoirs and the power of Kissinger's. But its limitations are more telling when it is compared to *Turmoil and Triumph*, the more weighty and honest work put together by George Shultz. Baker is said to have had nothing but disdain for his immediate predecessor, who tried to rescue Reagan and his foreign policy from the excesses of the zealots and the freelancers. Now that we have the record of

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the two men before us, Shultz towers over Baker. Shultz's book is as weighty and plodding and reliable and serious as the man himself; Baker's is the work of an amateur who happened onto great events whose meaning were of no intrinsic interest to him. Reagan—optimistic amid the tumult he unleashed, thoroughly uninterested in fact and in detail—cast his antithesis as Secretary of State and had been lucky in the choice he made. Bush, determined to run his own foreign policy, cloned himself. He must have relished the knowledge that the "little brother" doing his diplomacy was always in his shadow.

Baker worked hard and traveled far and wide: "700,000 miles to ninety nations," he tells us. But the traveler carried his limitations with him, and the foreign world remained unengaging and, well, foreign. The traveler's luck and curiosity never came to his rescue. In the hills of Kurdistan, in 1991, Baker saw unspeakable suffering, tens of thousands of Iraqis who had taken to the road when the rebellion that our victory had inspired, an uprising we had all but called for, was crushed. The word spread through the crowd that he was there and desperate petitioners sought to break through to him. A man who had endured a six-day march from the city of Kirkuk broke through the Turkish security detail and pleaded with Baker for the children suffering from exposure and hunger. A Kurdish delegation presented him with a respectful petition: "All Iraqis were waiting for freedom and democratic regime in Iraq. But the mistakes and wrong decisions that allowed the Iraqi regime to use tanks and helicopters caused this tragedy."

Baker witnesses all this, and on the helicopter ride back to Diyarbakir in Turkey he reflects to himself that "the people I had just seen were living examples of the will to be free." The spinmaster never rests. He had just seen not only a "true humanitarian emergency," but the consequences of an American decision. For a man in the loop, for a witness to things that mattered, he was oddly disengaged. He had seen the consequences of terrible doings, but he shakes off what he had witnessed to repeat the banal excuses of the Bush people: we did not want to see the "Lebanonization of Iraq," we did not want to turn Saddam into a nationalist hero, the "Arab street" would have never forgiven us a march on Baghdad, and so on.

The one exception to this tone of disengagement, the one affecting relationship that he seems to have picked up in the foreign world, was with his Soviet counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze. This is the interlocutor who got to him. The bond with Shevardnadze is unmistakable. Indeed, there is far more genuine warmth for Shevardnadze than there is for Baker's tennis partner and "big brother" Bush. Here is Baker on his friend: "Shevardnadze carried an aura of wisdom and insight into just how difficult the task was before them. Sometimes it seemed such wisdom carried a psychic cost. As reform became more difficult, his shoulders seemed to carry the burdens of the world, his grandfatherly hair made him look older than he was, and the patches under his eyes seemed to darken and lengthen, reflecting, it seemed, the true tragedy of Soviet history." When Baker writes that he came to rely on this relationship "again and again" to steer the cold war "to a peaceful close," when he speaks of his "great affection" for the Georgian, we believe him. The last glimpse of this relationship is of Baker, toward the very end of his State Department years, journeying some 3,000 miles to Tbilisi, to visit Shevardnadze, by then interim president of his homeland. We were lucky that Baker's one bit of real bonding was with a man possessed of decency and intelligence.

"You need to feed them to make them happy," Baker once said to Gorbachev of the American press. It is a fitting epitaph to Baker's own career and the reason for the relative oblivion in the history of American diplomacy to which he has been consigned. Live by the leak, die at the bookers' hands. It is interesting that the company of "wise men" on foreign affairs to which we induct our former secretaries of State has not been opened to Baker. For a man who courted the press for so many years, Baker is today absent from our debates. (Television is unsentimental.) Nor is there for Baker the deference accorded, say, Cyrus Vance in the deliberations of the foreign policy professionals and think tanks and establishment synods. Jim Baker never left the White House and domestic politics. If George Marshall, who refused to vote in elections in order to underscore his aloofness from domestic politics, marks one end of the spectrum, Baker mans the other: the experiment of foreign policy as the handler's art. The experiment failed.

The public caught on to this, or so it would appear, in the final months of the Bush years. When Bush became alarmed by the electoral prospects of the "two bozos" Bill Clinton and Al Gore, whom he dismissed as knowing less about foreign policy than did his dog, Millie, he

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made the nation an offer it couldn't refuse. He declared: "What I am going to do is say to Jim Baker when this campaign is over 'All right, let's sit down now. You do in domestic affairs what you've done in foreign affairs.' " The bozos won. The spell that foreign policy held over the public mind was broken. We shook off our awe, when we saw that all the wizardry was a pol's work.

FOUAD AJAMI teaches at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

Unfathomable Life

BY HELEN VENDLER

View with a Grain of Sand: Selected Poems by Wislawa Szymborska translated by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh

(Harvest/Harcourt Brace, 214 pp., $20)

"Again, and as ever, ... the most pressing questions / are naïve ones." The remarkable poet Wislawa Szymborska closes, with this remark, a late poem, "The Century's Decline," on the collapse of Marxist utopian hopes, after uttering one of her deliberately "naïve" questions: "How should we live?" Szymborska, one of a generation of notable Polish poets (she was born in 1923), was brought to American attention by Czeslaw Milosz in his history of Polish poetry, by two slim collections of translations, and by Stanislaw Baranczak in *Spoiling Cannibals' Fun*, his recent anthology of Polish poetry of the last two decades of Communist rule. Now Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh, his collaborator in that anthology, have brought out the largest selection of Szymborska—100 poems—in English.

They draw from seven of Szymborska's volumes, ranging from *Calling Out to Yeti*, her third collection, which appeared in 1957, through *The End and the Beginning*, which appeared in 1993. Their admirable versions, most of them readable as English poems owing to the exceptional gifts of the translators, make it possible to follow Szymborska's career, as she evolves from the high-spirited young poet—inspired equally by Marxist aspirations and by an antic sense of words—through the mature poet asking, in her "naïve" way, embarrassing political questions, to the older poet grieving for companions lost and hopes betrayed.

In spite of the translators' inventive substitutions, Szymborska's language-play as rendered in English is probably only a shadow of the felicitous original. Szymborska "translates well" because her poems, with all their local linguistic liveliness, adhere to a determined simplicity of narration. They are also resolutely "anonymous": their speaker is identified only rarely by gender, and never by age or nationality or ethnicity or local habitation. No lyric writer has ever been more confident of the universality of human response. Szymborska writes not for Poles alone, nor for women alone, nor for the twentieth century alone: she believes fiercely in a common epistemology and a common ethic, at least within the Western culture she writes from and to.

This new collection, regrettably, lacks an introduction that would set Szymborska in context for English-speaking readers. In a brief essay on the poet published in 1994 in *Salmagundi*, Baranczak recalls her beginnings:

> Under the circumstances of Poland's own version of Stalinist culture, any literary work that dared be either innovative or candid was doomed. Even though she was a sincere believer in Communism at this point, Szymborska was also too good a poet not to have sinned on both these accounts at once. The first collection that she prepared for publication was initially accepted but later scrapped, as aesthetically and ideologically not orthodox enough. Her debut, a heavily re-worked collection titled, with characteristically Socialist-Realist self-assertion, *That's What We Live For*, came out at last in 1952, much later than the first books of most of her coevals. Symbolically enough, Szymborska's second collection, published in 1954, was titled *Questions Put to Myself*.... [In a recent interview], she sums up the "mistake" underlying her early writing by saying that she tried then "to love humankind instead of loving human beings."

The difficulty in writing anonymously and generally—allegorically, almost—is that one will distance oneself from the personal, the local, the intimate. Szymborska feared, early on, her own tendency toward the overview, and the lofty aloofness it fostered. As she (in an early poem) ascends to the chilly Himalayas, she addresses the Yeti who is thinking of visiting the earth:

> Yeti, we've got Shakespeare there.
> Yeti, we play solitaire
> and violin. At nightfall,
> we turn lights on, Yeti.
>
> Up here it's neither moon nor earth.
> Tears freeze.
> Oh Yeti, semi-moonman,
> turn back, think again!

The still void of the Himalayas appeals to her, yet she half-ironically defends the earth's virtue and its "sentences," even as she flees its crime and its unjust "justice":

> Yeti, crime is not all
> we're up to down there.
> Yeti, not every sentence there
> means death.

Later, speaking through the voice of Cassandra, Szymborska admits the prophetess's distance in relation to her countrymen, a distance she fears in herself:

> I loved them.
> But I loved them haughtily.
> From heights beyond life.

Despite her aesthetic fastidiousness, and the intellectual haughtiness that is natural to her, Szymborska reluctantly admits, in her most famous early poem, that her "final exam" will be a historical and ethical one: as long as there is cruelty, her voice must be at the service of suffering. Here is the poem entire, which includes (as a simpler protest poem would not) the recurrent temptation to a skeptical impatience with ethical imperatives. The poem incorporates, besides its moral import, that necessary component to art, imagination's dream (here stimulated by the Brueghel painting described in the first stanza):

Breughel's Two Monkeys

> This is what I see in my dreams about
> final exams:
> two monkeys, chained to the floor, sit
> on the windowsill,
> the sky behind them flutters,
> the sea is taking its bath.
>
> The exam is History of Mankind.
> I stammer and hedge.
>
> One monkey stares and listens with
> mocking disdain,
> the other seems to be dreaming away—
> but when it's clear I don't know what to say
> he prompts me with a gentle
> clinking of his chain.

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Szymborska's narrative manner will not change notably over her writing life, but her rendition of suffering will enlarge as she sees the full brutality of life in Poland from the '40s through the '80s. A poem of 1985 called "Tortures" begins each of its five stanzas with the sentence, "Nothing has changed." The first stanza remarks on the unchangingness of the body over the centuries: "it has a good supply of teeth and fingernails; / its bones can be broken; its joints can be stretched." The second concerns the body's responsiveness: "The body still trembles as it trembled/ before Rome was founded and after, / in the twentieth century before and after Christ." The third notes the contemporary multiplication of offenses "requiring" torture—"new offenses have sprung up beside the old ones—/real, make-believe, short-lived, and nonexistent"—yet the body's cry "was, is, and will be a cry of innocence." The poem rises to a climax in its fourth stanza:

> Nothing has changed.
> Except perhaps the manners, ceremonies, dances.
> The gesture of the hands shielding the head
> has nonetheless remained the same.
> The body writhes, jerks, and tugs,
> falls to the ground when shoved, pulls up its knees,
> bruises, swells, drools, and bleeds.

The universality of suffering is Szymborska's chief life-theme, and reiterative narration (interspersed with epigram) is her usual rhetorical mode. Of course, neither theme nor mode, nor both together, would suffice to make a poem. Every lyric poem is the trace left by an emotion; and the entire trace (not merely the thematic or narrative content of the poem) defines the emotion, as a footprint defines a foot. Szymborska is a most ingenious constructor of traces. And her ingenuity is not factitious; it is, rather, philosophical. Each line in a poem—and each white space in a poem—must be weighed for the new imaginative information they bring.

Consider "Utopia," surely one of the classic treatments of the Soviet utopia as it was consolidated in Poland. The poem begins with the promise and desirability of utopia, both moral and intellectual, but sees that each promise has left suffering in its wake. Szymborska does justice both to the initial suffering under the ancien régime that provoked a hope for a new system, and to the later suffering caused by that system's betrayal of its utopian promises. Each successive line bears meditation, as—in the fiction of the poem—a populace, wrung by their destructive experience in the (politically irrational) ocean, at last comes ashore on a (Marxist) island:

> Island where all becomes clear.
>
> Solid ground beneath your feet.
>
> The only roads are those that offer access.
>
> Bushes bend beneath the weight of proofs . . .
>
> If any doubts arise, the wind dispels them instantly. . . .
>
> Unshakable Confidence towers over the valley.
> Its peak offers an excellent view of the Essence of Things.

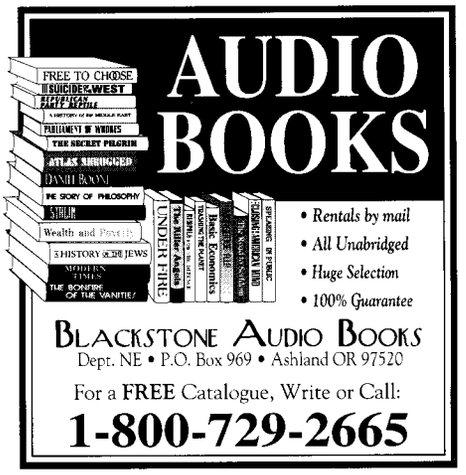
And then, after twelve such dawning statements about utopia, the poem makes its bleak sardonic turn:

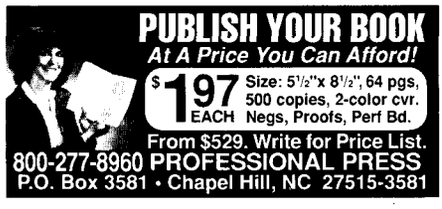
> For all its charms, the island is uninhabited,
> and the faint footprints scattered on its beaches
> turn without exception to the sea.
>
> As if all you can do here is leave
> and plunge, never to return, into the depths.
>
> Into unfathomable life.

Utopia is uninhabitable. It will always lose to unfathomable, dangerous, and chaotic life. Szymborska's poem enacts both the conviction of the early Marxists and their gradual disillusion, step by step, space by space, thought by thought.

Since Szymborska's sibylline and oracular sentences—formed in that same apodictic mode so congenial to universal system—risk being themselves examples of Unshakable Confidence, her admission that life is always unfathomable means that her sentences must also consider themselves provisional. An unexpected energy, often reactive (as in the case of her plunge into the ocean, away from the totalization of utopia) upsets and revivifies her lines. We deduce the extent of the anterior suffering by the energy needed to counteract it. Plunging into the sea—"never to return"—is usually a figure for suicide: Szymborska, writing "Utopia" in the '70s, is in a Poland where self-liberation and suicide are hardly distinguishable.

For intellectuals—and Szymborska is one—epistemological perplexity is also a form of suffering. The clean and perpendicular lines of her poetry reflect her wish to be absolutely exact, even transparent. "Don't bear me ill will, speech, that I borrow weighty words, / then labor heavily so that they may seem light." And yet language is heavy with anthropocen-

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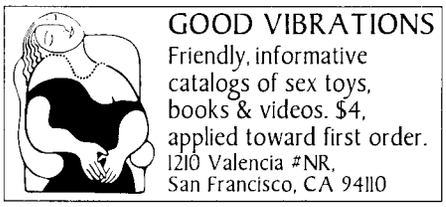
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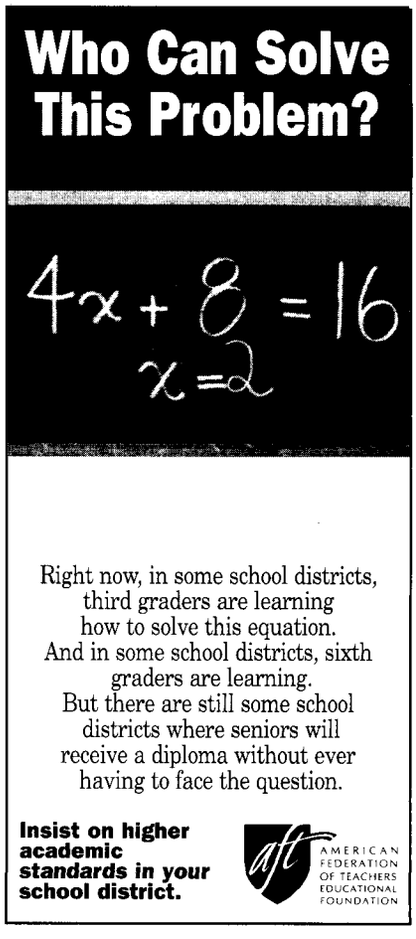
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tric perspectives. Thus the simplest sentence—"The window has a wonderful view of a lake"—immediately sets up Szymborska's rigorous denials:

but the view doesn't view itself.
It exists in this world
colorless, shapeless,
soundless, odorless, and painless.

The lake's floor exists floorlessly,
and its shore exists shorelessly.
Its water feels itself neither wet nor dry
and its waves to themselves are neither
singular nor plural.

How, then, can one speak of the view, the floor of the lake, the shore, the waves? Is it possible to de-anthropomorphize language, and not say "the sun sets," or "time passes"?

Time has passed like a courier with urgent
news.
But that's just our simile.
The character is invented, his haste is
make-believe,
his news inhuman.

Every poem by Szymborska is a struggle against taking common ways of expression for granted, or thinking that a single phrase can cover all the possibilities. In a revolt against her own genre—the generalizing poem—she multiplies instances in order to cover all bases, certain that any one example will be humanly insufficient. Her poem "Clothes," about medical suspicion and relief, wittily offers a multiple-choice checklist which will certainly, she intimates, cover your apprehensive visit to the doctor as well as hers:

You take off, we take off, they take off
coats, jackets, blouses, double-breasted
suits,
made of wool, cotton, cotton-polyester...
for now, the doctor says, it's not too bad,
you may get dressed, get rested up, get out
of town,
take one in case, at bedtime, after lunch ...
you see, and you thought, and we were
afraid that,
and he imagined, and you all believed;
it's time to tie, to fasten with shaking hands
shoelaces, buckles, velcro, zippers, snaps,
belts, buttons, cuff links, collars, neckties,
clasps
and to pull out of handbags, pockets,
sleeves
a crumpled, dotted, flowered, checkered
scarf
whose usefulness has suddenly been
prolonged.

It is the awful normalcy and generality of the dreaded verdict-visit that comes through in Szymborska's rendition: all over the world people are stripping in doctor's offices and expecting the worst. For Szymborska, the awful is, all too often, the normal, and her even tone embraces, in one of her most accomplished poems, the act of terrorism itself—which is, of course, entirely normal to its perpetrator:

The Terrorist, He's Watching

The bomb in the bar will explode at
thirteen twenty.
Now it's just thirteen sixteen.
There's still time for some to go in,
and some to come out.

The terrorist has already crossed the street.
The distance keeps him out of danger,
and what a view—just like the movies:

A woman in a yellow jacket, she's going in.
A man in dark glasses, he's coming out.
Teenagers in jeans, they're talking.
Thirteen seventeen and four seconds.
The short one, he's lucky, he's getting on
a scooter,
but the tall one, he's going in.

Thirteen seventeen and forty seconds.
That girl, she's walking along with a green
ribbon in her hair.
But then a bus suddenly pulls in front of
her.
Thirteen eighteen.
The girl's gone.
Was she that dumb, did she go in or not,
We'll see when they carry them out.

Thirteen nineteen.
Somehow no one's going in.
Another guy, fat, bald, is leaving, though.
Wait a second, looks like he's looking for
something in his pockets and
at thirteen twenty minus ten seconds
he goes back in for his crummy gloves.

Thirteen twenty exactly.
This waiting, it's taking forever.
Any second now.
No, not yet.
Yes, now.
The bomb, it explodes.

A poem such as this one was inconceivable, stylistically, before the twentieth century; it defines an epoch, a type, an ethic. It stands for Lockerbie and Belfast, Jerusalem and Oklahoma. It was, one could say, hanging in the air waiting to be written, one of those poems that inscribes itself without effort on the mind receiving it.

Though Szymborska excels in such grim impersonal narratives, she is equally able to evoke—always obliquely, always originally—intense tenderness. The death of someone beloved, for example, is narrated from the point of view of his "Cat in an Empty Apartment":

Nothing seems different here,
but nothing is the same.
Nothing has been moved,
but there's more space.
And at nighttime no lamps are lit....

Someone was always, always here,
then suddenly disappeared
and stubbornly stays disappeared....

Just wait till he turns up,
just let him show his face.
Will he ever get a lesson
on what not to do to a cat.
Sidle toward him
as if unwilling
and ever so slow
on visibly offended paws,
and no leaps or squeals at least to start.

The equally wrenching elegy for Krzysztof Baczynski, a poet who died at 23 in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, exhibits another of Szymborska's characteristically unexpected angles of approach. She heartbreakingly creates the poet as he would be had he continued to live till now, imagining him "Goateed, balding, / gray-haired," eating his lunch:

Sometimes someone would
yell from the doorway: "Mr. Baczynski,
phone call for you"—
and there'd be nothing strange about that
being him, about him standing up, straightening his sweater,
and slowly moving toward the door.

Syzmborska is not sentimental. She sees that the 65-year-old man would have coarsened "as if clay had covered up the angelic marble" of his exalted youth: "The price, after all, for not having died already / goes up not in leaps but step by step, and he would / pay that price, too." She speaks from the knowledge of the price that she has herself paid for aging. But the ethical observation would be inert were it not for the poet's initial leap of imagination extending Baczynski's short life—a human wish so powerful it creates a full-scale scenario, down to the yearning phone call.

It would be wrong to consider Szymborska without asking whether, the anonymity of her stance notwithstanding, she does not sometimes write "as a woman." The answer is yes and no. Yes, she writes as Cassandra and as Lot's wife, she writes on Isadora Duncan, on a prehistoric figure of the Great Mother, and on Rubens's women; and all of these could legitimately be taken as reflections on femaleness. Yet the poem on Cassandra is chiefly a meditation on how prophets, any prophets, are hated; and Lot's wife accounts for her halt by citing her "age ... Distance.... / The futility of wandering. Torpor. / ... in desolation. / In shame"—all of them gender-neutral factors. It seems to me that Szymborska writes most "as a woman" when she chooses a "humble" subject such as an onion (as a symbol of a non-dualist conception of nature); or

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when her imagination darts to a fantasy on Hitler's actual baby-photograph:

> And who's this little fellow in his itty-bitty robe?
> That's tiny baby Adolf, the Hitlers' little boy!...
> Whose teensy hand is this, whose little ear and eye and nose?...
>
> A little pacifier, diaper, rattle, bib,
> our bouncing boy, thank God and knock on wood, is well,
> looks just like his folks, like a kitten in a basket,
> like the tots in every other family album.
> Sh-h-h, let's not start crying, sugar.
> The camera will click from under that black hood.
>
> The Klinger Atelier, Grabenstrasse, Braunen.
> And Braunen is a small but worthy town—
> *honest businesses, obliging neighbors,*
> smell of yeast dough, of gray soap.
> No one hears howling dogs, or fate's footsteps.
> A history teacher loosens his collar
> and yawns over homework.

"Hitler's First Photograph" is not Szymborska's best poem, but its opening is startling and daring, its black humor confronting—as only a woman might think to do—the mystery of how babies turn out. Szymborska often approaches ethical issues from just such an odd (and perhaps implicitly female) vantage; her poem "Voices," about what we now call ethnic cleansing, simply lets us in on conversations between Roman governors:

> You can't move an inch, my dear Marcus Emilius,
> without Aborigines sprouting up as if from the earth itself....
>
> These irksome little nations, thick as flies.
> It's enough to make you sick, dear Quintus Decius....
>
> They drive us mild-mannered sorts to sterner measures
> with every new mountain we cross, dear Gaius Cloelius.
>
> If only they weren't always in the way, the Auruncians, the Marsians,
> but they always do get in the way, dear Spurius Manlius....
>
> Little nations do have little minds.
> The circle of thick skulls expands around us.
> Reprehensible customs, Backward laws.
> Ineffectual gods, my dear Titus Vilius....

This seditious little poem of communications among the Spurious and the Vile was probably protected from the censors in 1972 only by its historical setting. It may be that Szymborska's resolute impersonality, anonymity and allegorical stance were forced into being by Polish censorship; but it is equally possible that her view of lyric as that which describes the irreducible human invariables evoked her geometrical abstraction of voice and her aloof narrations "from above."

In a time when it is being metaphysically denied that any human universals exist, it is salutary to read Szymborska on the ancientness of human evil. Mercifully, Szymborska also notes the perpetual resurgence of hope and the deep rewards of human attachment. "My identifying features," she says in the poem "Sky," "are rapture and despair." Both are found here, but perhaps more despair than rapture, in Szymborska's stern and unforgiving scan of the savage world that she has learned to understand.

HELEN VENDLER's *The Given and the Made: Lowell, Berryman, Dove, Graham* and *The Breaking of Style: Hopkins, Heaney, Graham* were published last fall by Harvard University Press.

You Can't Be Serious

BY DANIEL AARON

Genius in Disguise: Harold Ross of The New Yorker by Thomas Kunkel

(Random House, 497 pp., $25)

Harold Wallace Ross, founder and editor of *The New Yorker* magazine, is probably remembered more for his idiosyncrasies than for his genius. Tight-lipped about himself, he stands out colorfully in the recollections of his staff members and contributors who reported at length on his crotchets, expostulations ("God, how I pity me"'), obsessions, antipathies and tirades. Their composite portrait of Ross is complex and contradictory. He seems to have been a shy and old-fashioned man, even prudish (uncomfortable with what he called the "bathroom and bedroom stuff"), unobtrusively kind and pugnaciously loyal. He could also be profane, abrasive, crude, irascible, mulish, philistine. His one all-absorbing passion was his magazine, to which he subordinated everything else, not excluding friends and wives.

Thomas Kunkel's book, the story of the man and his darling project, is selective and dispassionate, and it is briskly told. Understandably, Kunkel focuses on the magazine itself, on the starts and shifts in its history, but he doesn't neglect Ross's picaresque apprenticeship: how he left home as a tramp reporter at 16, crisscrossed the country for seven years, joined the army in 1917 (he was one of the first volunteers), found a place on *Stars and Stripes*, the army weekly, shortly after he landed in France, and ended up as its managing editor after the armistice. Running that paper, Kunkel thinks, made Ross see the possibility of experimenting with "unfamiliar journalistic forms" and acquainted him with the technical operations required to handle a big publication. He stops short of saying *Stars and Stripes* was the germ of the metropolitan magazine that Ross and his associate Alexander Woollcott were then "kicking around," but it must have figured in *The New Yorker*'s inception.

More problematical is the question raised by Ben Hecht: How could a roughneck from the boondocks "set himself up as a pilot of a sophisticated, elegant, periodical"? Nothing in Ross's background provides an answer. His experience in Paris, where he spent most of his time drinking and playing poker, doesn't appear to have quickened his aesthetic sensibility. He was all for the main chance. Shortly before he left France, he compiled and profitably marketed *Yank Talk*, a collection of soldier jokes that anticipated in tone and substance the corny doggerel and smoking-room humor of William Fawcett's *Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang* (1923). Back in the States he edited successively a civilian equivalent of *Stars and Stripes*, an American Legion weekly and, very briefly, *Judge*, but already (perhaps influenced by the circle of New York wits and artists with whom he now associated) he was planning a magazine of his own.

Ross wanted it to be intellectual yet not hifalutin, satirical but not iconoclastic, urbane and smart—and above all entertaining. No single periodical, in his opinion, combined the mix of the traditional and the up-to-date he was seeking: not the stale and antiquated

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comic weeklies, *Life* and *Judge*, not the elegant and worldly *Vanity Fair*, not Mencken's somewhat Nietzschean *American Mercury*, nor the "snappy" adolescent *College Humor*. Collectively, however, these and other magazines contained features that he would incorporate into his incubating *New Yorker*. He wasn't about to invent a new kind of humor magazine. Instead he chose to revive, as Kunkel puts it, "a moribund form" of literary journalism and to polish it "to a high degree." The brilliant cluster of writers and graphic artists he assembled were mostly veterans of the national weeklies and the city press. What gave *The New Yorker* its special distinction over the years had less to do with the originality of its contents (it did not, as Kunkel asserts, inaugurate the one-line caption or change the character of American fiction) than with the passion and the professionalism of its editor.

Kunkel charts the course of *The New Yorker* from its shaky beginning to its zenith in the late '40s, when it had become an important cultural institution locally and nationally. In retrospect, this burgeoning seems at once fortuitous and inevitable; but it took a lot of fumbling, tinkering and luck before the magazine began to look like the one that Ross had sketched in his prospectus: part guide to "miscellaneous entertainment" and "smart gathering places," part unserious commentary on the week's events, each issue interlarded with fiction, poetry, reviews and humorous drawings pointedly unconcerned with the thoughts of "the little old lady in Dubuque."

It might have flopped, however, without timely infusions of cash supplied by Ross's unloved partner, Raoul Fleischmann. It survived because of Ross's inspired hunches and his talent for picking talented people, and because he paid attention to valid criticism and followed good suggestions. The first issues, pallid and derivative, offered little promise of the magazine to be, but it rapidly improved in substance and style. By the end of the '20s, Ross and his agglomerate of writers and artists had achieved, Kunkel says, "collective understanding of *New Yorker* material." Ross's magazine was at last what he wanted it to be: "amusing, informed, up-to-date, and completely trustworthy."

James Thurber thought that 1933 was the turning point in the magazine's history, the year that marked "the beginning of the end" of what he had first known as "an irreverent, understaffed, comic weekly with little on its mind, going nowhere in particular." The Great Depression and the portents of the coming war darkened the national mood and put Ross in a quandary. A covert moralist, and temperamentally a conservative like his friend Mencken, Ross suspected liberal piety of any sort. He was also mildly colorophobic and not at all happy with the left-of-center biases of some of his reporters and cartoonists. At the same time, his visceral disgust with certain aspects of capitalist culture, chiefly advertising ("a lamentable, unavoidable necessity") and his Mark Twainish cynicism separated him from the anti-FDR gentry satirized in the drawings of Peter Arno. He "loved the smell of success," A.J. Liebling recalled, but he was "emotionally irreverent." First and last the professional, he vigilantly guarded the right of his reporters to express their opinions, no matter how contrary they were to his own or to those of conservative subscribers. His only tests were accuracy and style.

Ross would have liked to turn his back on much that went on during the strident '30s. The Depression was a "nuisance" to be waited out, and he stubbornly stuck to his conviction that *The New Yorker* was not, as Thurber said, "designed to stem tides, join crusades, or take political stands." Its mission was to entertain, not to evangelize, to be apolitical and detached and to make people laugh. Ross opted for E.B. White's revealing dictum: "It's best to have strong curiosity, weak affiliations."

This wasn't a surefire recipe at a time when Americans were laughing in different ways and for different reasons. The brand of humor in the funny pieces that Ross was demanding from his artists and writers seemed politically and socially offensive to radicals of various persuasions who detested the vestiges of nonsense and whimsy from the decadent '20s that were still detectable in *The New Yorker*. Dwight Macdonald, later one of its regulars, accused the magazine in 1937 of deliberately cultivating trivia and displaying a "Jovian aloofness from the common struggle." And in the same year, the Communist *New Masses* devoted several issues to exposing *The New Yorker*'s contaminating influence and to inviting its socially sensitive contributors to search their political souls. If they really wanted to use their humorous talents beyond making "death, war, and revolution so trifling and amusing as to be pleasures," it was time to sharpen their barbs and thrust and twist their stilettos until Park Avenue screamed.

Neither Ross nor his leftish contributors resorted to this tactic, but by the later '30s his magazine's insouciance had diminished a little, and after Pearl Harbor all of its departments were touched by the war. The change was especially notable in the fiction, which became, Kunkel writes, "more somber, enigmatic, and sometimes violent," and which sneaked in themes and topics heretofore frowned upon by the squeamish editor. Interspersed with the well-plotted stories set in the "country" and retailing noninflammatory events in the lives of the comfortable middle class were tales about scruffy men and women in gritty surroundings, the accounts of their predicaments bracketed between columns of advertisements featuring costly things and expensive people.

Consider the following situations. A pair of Philadelphia chippies are ditched

Between Takes

I was standing in for myself, my own stunt double,
in a scene where I was meant to do a double

or maybe even a triple back somersault
off the bed. In one hand she held a glass of Meursault,

in the other something akin to a Consulate.
When she spoke, she spoke through the consolette

in a diner-booth where Meatloaf and The Platters
still larded it over those meatloaf platters

with all the trimmings. This was a moment,
it seemed, of such moment

that she felt obliged to set down both cigarette and glass
and peer as through the limo's tainted glass

for a glimpse of the mountain stream that, bolder and bolder,
did its little bit of laundry among the boulders.

PAUL MULDOON

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by their grungy dates in a midtown bus terminal; a male hairdresser with a gift of gab tries and fails to connect with his ex-girlfriend; a mother of two, about to run off with a truck driver, frightens him away when her kids refuse to be left behind; a feral 13-year-old savagely repels the attempt of an ailing derelict to recover a fifty-cent piece, first spotted by the boy, that had dropped through a subway grille; a barkeeper smashes each emptied glass of a black customer (his regular clientele expects him to) and then whacks a drunken Southern racist on the head with a bat when the latter picks a fight with the black man. Fiction of this sort thickened *The New Yorker* landscape and gave a nod to the underprivileged; but it did not signal a reversal of policy or a new birth of seriousness.

The look and the tone of the magazine didn't change appreciably. Perhaps the cartoons became more wryly humorous and tart, the dispatches of its far-flung correspondents on the expanding global war a touch less jaunty. Even so, Ross's editorial criteria still applied. Writers were encouraged not to joke about drunkenness and adultery, although these topics might be legitimately introduced, according to the magazine's working guidelines, to point a moral or adorn "a sufficiently grim tale." Homosexuality, needless to say, was "definitely out as humor and dubious in any case." Expletives were acceptable if not tossed in gratuitously. Scatological language was taboo. Ross favored plain prose, unambiguous and unexperimental, pruned of adjectives and adverbs, and grammatical. He disliked the academic and the recondite and what his editorial lieutenant, E.B. White, called "verbal infirmity" and "euphemistic softness." Clear writing was medicinal; it checked the spread of linguistic contagion.

After twenty-five years of Herculean labor, a part of this "conservative with an isolationist bent" still lingered in the nineteenth century with the ghost of Herbert Spencer, the seer of his youth. *The New Yorker* radiated modernity without losing touch with an older America, raffish and genteel, that Ross's writers entertainingly evoked. It was now a truly national magazine; and for a moment it contained and held in equilibrium the ingredients of a common culture. There is no indication, however, that Ross ever thought of his creation in such terms. He was just a great editor.

The magazine whose health he equated with the health of the republic was, as Kunkel says, an extension of himself. It epitomized his ambition and his single-mindedness (his aim, White said, had been "to publish one good magazine, not a string of successful ones") and his aptitude for concentrating the skills of many on a single objective. In his quest for perfection, he kept scouting for the extraordinary, frantically searching for an all-purpose second in command, or "Jesus," to help synchronize and lubricate the magazine's churning operations. His talented and experienced senior editor, William Shawn, took over after Ross died in 1951. He was an able successor, but Ross was sui generis.

No one could function on a dozen levels as he did, none had such an unerring eye for mistakes, discrepancies, illogicalities and stylistic imprecision. Perhaps, as Kunkel suggests, a more systematic education might have blunted Ross's curiosity, or at least inhibited him from raising the kinds of questions formally educated people would have hesitated to ask. Some writers, Edmund Wilson for one, resented Ross's nitpicking interrogations which, he said, "put a premium on insipidity and banality." Most writers, however, thought they had benefited from the pestering queries of Ross and his staff and were glad to let them, in Ross's words, "backdrop the small, more or less technical parts" of their contributions.

Kunkel hardly attempts to fathom the transformation of a tough, hard-drinking, poker-playing reporter into a New York luminary, or to speculate on what lay behind this Ahabian pursuit of the perfect magazine. The private Ross remains holed up in his cave, but at least Kunkel spares the reader a lot of bootless guess work about the public "Mr. Ross" who resisted intimacy and baffled his friends. He writes enough, but mercifully not too much, on the subject of the overexposed, log-rolling, self-pollinating wits of the Algonquin circle. He hasn't much to say about the last two of Ross's three wives or, for that matter, about other marginal figures whose omission keeps his narrative free of biographical clutter.

What he does evoke superbly is Ross's personality and presence, the zoo-like ambience in which he thrashed and thrived for twenty-six years, and his remarkable group of artists, writers and editors, some of whom spurned higher paying jobs to join his motley staff. His book—a collage of hundreds of facts and impressions, snatches of letters, query sheets and editorial dicta—is by far the best work on Ross to date and the one, I suspect, whose judgments he would have morosely validated.

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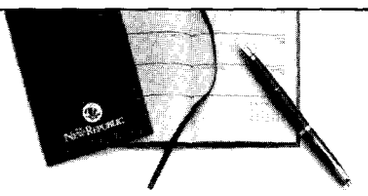

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

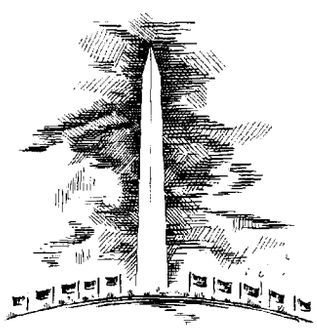
Little women

IT USED TO BE THAT ALL THE psychological tomes about adolescents and their development were really about adolescent boys. Then along came the Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan, who interviewed a lot of girls on the cusp of puberty and decided that their experience was different. For girls, Gilligan observed, all the usual components of growing up—like independence and self-sufficiency—were in conflict with all the usual components of femininity—like selflessness and nurturing. The result was an extra burden of confusion about how to make one's self up to face the world. It was a useful observation. But a decade or so later, Gilligan's insight has degenerated into a general sense of alarm about the plight of teenage girls. As Mary Pipher, the author of the best-selling *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls,* puts it: "Something dramatic happens to girls in early adolescence. Just as planes and ships mysteriously disappear into the Bermuda Triangle, so do the selves of girls go down in droves. They crash and burn in a social and developmental Bermuda Triangle."

PIPHER GOES ON TO TERM "AMERica today" a "girl-destroying place" and our culture a "girl-poisoning" one. She is not the only one to strike this theme: a solemn parade of radio psychologists and self-esteem gurus now share the conviction that life for teenage girls has never been quite so bad as it is in America today. Books like Pipher's and like *SchoolGirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap,* and *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls* vary in subtlety but have in common a reluctance to concede that much has improved for girls over the last twenty-five years or so, as a result of feminism or of anything else. Where once we saw adolescence as a storm to be weathered, these books see it as a disaster in which the frail little ships of female self-esteem inevitably founder, never to be righted. Childhood and adolescence used to be portrayed as of a piece; but these writers see the break as a far more dramatic one, as an Edenic idyll before the mall.

"WHEN MY COUSIN POLLY WAS A girl," writes Pipher,

> she was energy in motion. She danced, did cartwheels and splits, played football, basketball and baseball with the neighborhood boys, wrestled with my brothers, biked, climbed trees and rode horses.... Then Polly had her first period and started junior high. She tried to keep up her old ways, but she was called a tomboy and chided for not being more lady-like. She was excluded by her boy pals and by girls, who were moving into makeup and romances. This left Polly confused and shaky. She had temper tantrums and withdrew from both the boys' and girls' groups. Later she quieted down and reentered as Becky Thatcher. She wore stylish clothes and watched from the sidelines as boys acted and spoke.



ONE DAY, THERE YOU are, a self-possessed androgyne; and then puberty strikes, and you're suddenly a slump-shouldered simperer in "stylish clothes," mooning after boys and toting up calories. None of these books sets much store by the idea that girls can go through phases in which they plumb the silliest depths of capital-f femininity, and come out the other side. Or that even in shopping for lip gloss, girls can be tightening bonds with friends that will sustain them through the harder, more essential things. My 13-year-old niece and her friends spend a certain amount of time painting their nails improbable colors, anointing themselves with weird-smelling body oils, drawing bloopy hearts around baby-faced boys in their yearbook and pretending to faint at the mention of Brad Pitt. But they also write plays and short stories, go on photography expeditions all over the city, hurl themselves around on the soccer field and debate the merits of their favorite '60s music. They're complicated, like the rest of us, only more so, and there's something a little puritanical and punitive about wishing they'd be less, oh you know, *girly.* Sure, their futures hold bra-snapping hall monitors and bulimic classmates and the spectral images of skeletal super-models, but these are smart and sensible girls and I think they'll be just fine.

I DON'T MEAN TO MINIMIZE THE very real problems that many teenagers face—dead-end schools and torn up families, the constant shadow of guns and drugs—but these are problems of the very poor, not the mostly white and middle-class students that girl-crisis experts tend to track. They are injuries of class, not gender, and they afflict boys at least as much as they do girls. I certainly don't want to imply that we've achieved the elusive goal of gender equity in every classroom. But life as a girl these days really *isn't that bad.* In many ways, it's better than ever. Many more girls today study math and science, harbor serious career aspirations, play sports, learn about powerful women in their history and social science classes and meet them in their day-to-day lives. Girls are more likely than boys to finish high school and to attend college, and they are slowly closing the gap in standardized math and science scores. The Girl Scouts, an organization I shunned in my own youth because sewing was the way to get ahead in it, is now enamored of female empowerment. It gives out pins in "Career Exploration" and badges in "Science Discovery" and in something called "Girls are Great." Even popular music, Pipher's dreaded purveyor of "girl-poisoning" "McSex"—offers a new range of female possibility, from the bespectacled Boho Lisa Loeb to the brainy and foul-mouthed Liz Phair, from the muscle-bound sass-artists Salt N' Pepa to the macha Melissa Etheridge. The feminist movement can take a good deal of the credit for these accomplishments, so it seems perverse and self-defeating to downplay them as assiduously as the girl-crisis authors do.

THERE IS A MOMENT IN PEGGY Orenstein's *SchoolGirls* that crystallizes a good deal of the fatalism pervading books like hers. Orenstein is an uncommonly intelligent reporter, and her book combines empathetic fieldwork in two middle schools, one prosperous and suburban; the other poor and inner-city. Yet even she can't resist asking the leading question or making the deflating remark, designed to confirm that girls are always and everywhere beleaguered. When a gifted 13-year-old named Evie tells her that "she thought girls had an advantage: since more was expected of boys, they had to play by the rules, while girls could be more creative," Orenstein replies: "Yes, ... but boys still end up ahead." Time was when feminists were more careful with words like that: they sounded too much like self-fulfilling prophecy.

MARGARET TALBOT

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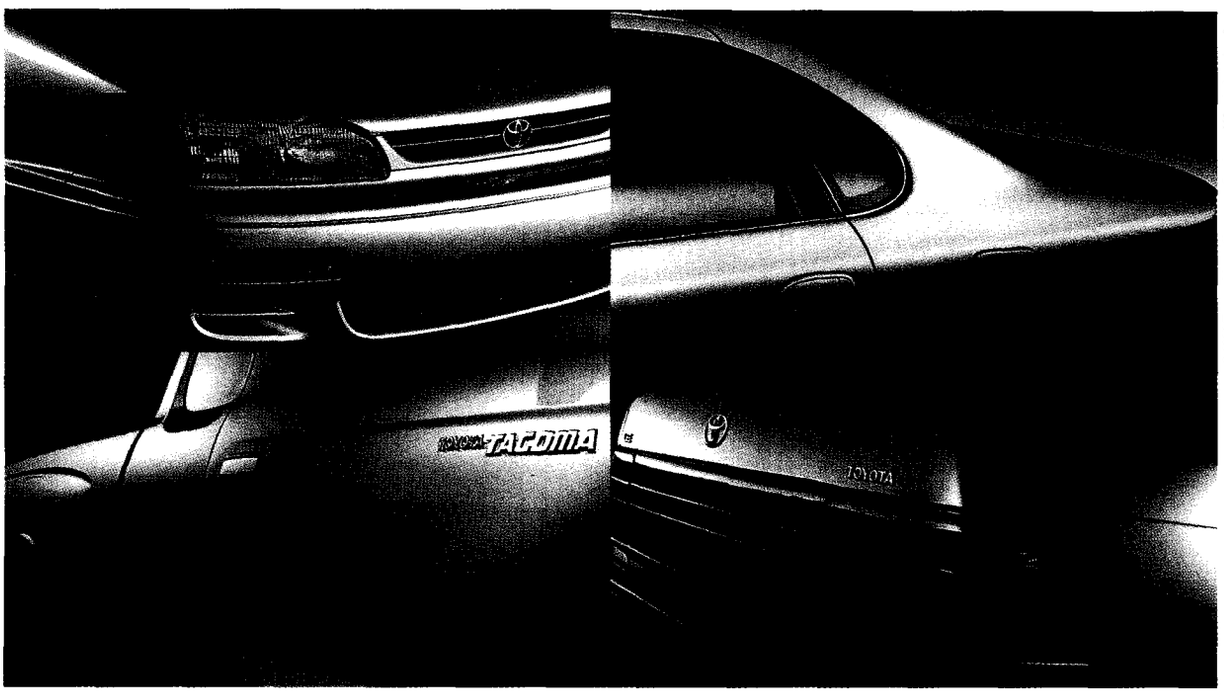

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